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INTRODUCTION: THE NEW BIBLE.

INTRODUCTION: THE NEW BIBLE.

THE geologist has made the hills new by his discoveries. He has not destroyed them, but he has interpreted them. The astronomer has made the ancient heavens new by his marvellous revelations. He has not shut them out from our view, but he has disclosed some of their secrets. The geologist and the astronomer have banished from mountain and star the divinities which a superstitious fancy once located there, but our scientists have not made these realms profane and undivine; they are still the habitation of the Eternal, but of the Eternal who filleth all in all. We do not worship *them* as our far-off ancestors did, and yet we worship still; for mystery and divineness embrace us everywhere. To us hill and star are residences of the Living God, but our thoughts of him are vaster and our reverence more spiritual. The truest piety pleads that the search for larger truths

in hill and star go on. Nothing unclean or harmful can there be found. Petty marvels are swept aside to give place to the sublimer mystery. The puny deities are brushed from their unreal thrones to make way for the Eternal. Whatever is real must be accepted, and this will be found the more religious. In these *realities* we approach and apprehend God. The deciphered hillside is so much of Providence revealed; and all earnest star-gazing that ends in more truth, instead of profaning the heavens, adds a new point of light to our sheltering firmament.

Now, just as geologist and astronomer have made hills and stars new, so, too, Biblical scholars by their discoveries have given us a new Bible. The theories of our fathers respecting its origin, growth, and character, have been swept aside by a more thorough examination of those facts of its history in which God himself resides. We see with greater clearness the impulse and purpose which produced these writings. We understand the purely human conditions which gave them birth, the limitations as well as the nobility of the authors who penned

them. We appreciate the greatness of their varying messages, but we also trace the blurring lines of error and passion which mar these pages. There is truth enough to make them grandly human. There is superstition enough to prove that they are no more than human. Discovery has pointed out compilation in works which our fathers attributed to a single author. Investigations have proved that there are contradictions where former students forced a harmony. Careful research finds errors of statement and imperfections in moral teaching; and upon thorough examination we learn that certain books have been assigned to men who never wrote them and to ages some centuries earlier than their true date.

It is surely a new Bible that Biblical science places in our hands. It is no longer the perfect product of a special Providence, the unique and peculiar residence of Almighty God. But religion has suffered no calamity from this change. Though the Bible loses its monopoly of God, human history everywhere gains in divineness; and, while the Eternal escapes from confinement in its texts, it is to become the Father of

all souls. No harm can come to religion from the most daring researches into the origin and character of the Scriptures. God and the soul existed before they were written. Their holiest office has been to bring God and man into closer touch. The Bible has done harm wherever its texts have been used to arrest free growth; for we must remember that the Bible was made for man, and not man for the Bible.

The discovery of the real Bible gives us a new Bible, whose pages are thereby invested with a more spiritual interest and whose texts must be put to more rational uses. No criticism can profane or destroy the Scriptures. It may change our attitude, and revise our estimate, and modify our method of study; but, however produced, the Bible is here, and the truth it enshrines does not depend upon the manner of its production. If written by the finger of God in most miraculous fashion, it brings no help except as it stirs the heart and enlightens the mind; and, though compiled in most careless fashion from fugitive fragments, it is divinely helpful if it makes us more conscious of our heritage from

God and of our obligations to mankind. The discoveries of Biblical science destroy some old notions, and put a stop to ancient usages, which were once thought to be very sacred and precious. But what the truth thus destroys had neither reality nor sanctity. Scientific study no more destroys the Bible than does star-gazing blot out the heavens; but each emancipates us from superstitions, and brings us nearer to the real divinity in star and Bible. Biblical scholarship has put in our hands a new Bible; and it is for religion to adjust itself to these facts by putting Scripture to new and more rational uses, confident that the whole truth about the Bible will help man on to a richer and nobler life.

Let me state briefly some of these discoveries now generally accepted: —

I. It has been clearly and conclusively proved that Moses did not write the first five books of the Bible, commonly called the Pentateuch or Mosaic Law. After over a century of reverent and careful research scholars are now almost unanimous* in

*For the proof of this statement, see Briggs, "The Bible, the Church, and the Reason," Appendix VI., 1892.

their conclusion that the first six books, from Genesis to Joshua, once formed a complete work, which first existed in its present shape in the fifth century before our era, when it was made the foundation, or statute book, of Judaism by Ezra, about 444 B.C. It was then called simply the *Tora*. It is now known to scholars as the Hexateuch. It represents over three centuries of code-making and historical writing. It is a compilation from several writings, all some centuries later than Moses. About 800 B.C. a Hebrew writer composed a work known as the *Jehovist* because he named God Jehovah. In this he incorporated annals and legends which we find embedded in fragmentary form in Genesis and Exodus. He also preserved a primitive code of laws, found in Exodus xx. 20–xxiii. 33, which was probably the common law of the Hebrews in the time of the early monarchy. It is now called the "Book of the Covenant," or the *first legislation*. A half-century later another writer composed a similar work, going over nearly the same ground; and this document, from the author's use of the name Elohim for God,

is called the *Elohist*. And fragments from this are embedded throughout the Hexateuch. The earliest version of the Ten Commandments originally belonged to this work. We find it in Exodus xx. 7–17, a very ancient code, probably not the teaching of Moses as here given (another version exists in Deuteronomy v. 6–21); but it doubtless contains material from the hand of Moses, who becomes to modern scholars a dim figure, whose person has been obscured by legend.

About 621 B.C. another treatise was composed, now called the *Deuteronomist*, chiefly contained in Deuteronomy v.–xxvi. We have here, along with ancient laws and legends, many new teachings and regulations; for the work represents a reform movement in the line of the prophets who taught in the previous century. This was put in force by the reformer, King Josiah. It is known as the *second legislation*, and it was Israel's first sacred book. In after years these three documents were united by a compiler, who also included some fragments from other sources.* Thus what

* It is not necessary to go here into details respecting the *Second Jehovist* and other subsidiary sources.

the Hebrews called the Tora, or the Law, kept growing from age to age. During and after the exile there was a decided expansion in the direction of Levitical law and priestly ritual; and the material added by these efforts to the *historico-legal* work, just described, found largely in Numbers and Leviticus, is called the *Priest Code*, or *third legislation;* and it forms the fourth document which entered into the construction of the Hexateuch. The general conclusion is that this work, which stands at the beginning of the Bible, is non-Mosaic in origin and composite in character, a slowly built aggregation of annals and legends and laws, which reached its present shape in the fifth century before our era. And we also learn that these annals and laws grew up in a perfectly natural manner, different in no respect from the annals and laws of other ancient peoples, so far as origin and scope are concerned. These discoveries revolutionize our conceptions of Hebrew history, and they make it possible for us to understand its problems as never before.*

* The history of the discoveries which have led up to these conclusions may be found in Kuenen, "The Hexateuch," Eng. Tr., 1886; in

II. No part of the Bible has been set in newer light by modern scholarship or invested with fresher interest than the work of the Hebrew prophets. They have been put in new relation to the development of Israel's faith, and given a new place in the order of its evolution. Formerly the progress of history was given this sequence: the Law, the Psalter, the Prophets; but the new arrangement is: the Prophets, the Law, the Psalter. This discovery has made it pos-

Pfleiderer, "The Development of Theology," 1890; in Toy's sketch of Abraham Kuenen, the *New World*, March, 1892; Briggs, "The Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch," 1893.

Probably the best popular exposition of these conclusions and the reasons upon which they are based is contained in Driver, "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament," 1891. An admirable treatment of this subject is given by W. Robertson Smith, "The Old Testament in the Jewish Church," revised edition, 1892. A most thorough discussion of the Pentateuchal problem has been in progress in the *Hebraica* since October, 1888, between President Harper and Professor Green. Wellhausen's History of Israel, Eng. Tr., 1885, and Kuenen's "Hexateuch," Eng. Tr., 1886, are still invaluable to the specialist, to say nothing of the untranslated works of Dillmann, Stade, Budde, and Kittel. Efforts have recently been made to popularize these discoveries, and to make the analysis of the Pentateuch into its various documents plain to the eye by using different type to represent the fragments taken from each. Of these the most successful are Bacon, "Genesis of Genesis," 1892, and Addis, "The Documents of the Hexateuch," 1892. The only recent work of any importance in opposition is Robertson, "The Early Religion of Israel," 1891; and this is of value only as a protest against extreme and hasty inferences. Every one acquainted with recent Biblical literature, and also with the position of all the scholars in this department of European universities, is aware that the general view here set forth is almost universally assumed as completely established.

sible for the first time to form a clear and natural picture of the growth of the Hebrew religion. The old order involved a confusion similar to that which would follow in American history, should we put the abolition agitation before the Declaration of Independence and Whittier and Longfellow before the Blue Laws of Connecticut.* In fact, these prophets, from Amos to Isaiah, stand really at the head of Israel's spiritual development. The prophetic movement of the eighth century before our era was a departure from the old lines, the expression of new religious aspirations, a great step forward toward spirituality. Their work was formerly described as the prediction of far-off events, a sort of history before the time, and especially the prediction of a future Messiah. We now understand that they were first of all social and religious reformers, advocates of a lofty ethical monotheism, expressed in the two affirmations, God is infinite holiness, and salvation is

*For the best discussion of this subject see Kuenen, "Religion of Israel," Eng. Tr., vol. i., 1874; W. Robertson Smith, "The Old Testament in the Jewish Church," new edition, 1892; Kirkpatrick, "The Doctrine of the Prophets," 1892. The work of Ewald, and that of Stanley, based upon it, though valuable and interesting, are somewhat out of date.

personal righteousness. Their task and greatness lay not in prediction, but in moral and religious instruction.

It is now generally admitted that these Hebrew prophets only indulged in prediction in an incidental way, and only in reference to the future immediately before them. They made fewer attempts at prediction than is generally supposed; for very much of what looks like successful foretelling of far-off and particular events turns out to be history written after the occurrence, when we determine the true date of these writings. Many of the prophetic works, bearing a single name, are compilations. The dual character of Isaiah is almost universally conceded; and, when we put chapters xl.–lxvi. in the last half of the sixth century, what here once looked like prediction becomes mere historical narration.* The latter part of Zechariah, chapters ix.–xiv., is much later than the earlier chapters. It probably contains fragments from two

* Any one who consults Smith, "The Book of Isaiah," vol. ii., 1890, will see how complete the argument is for the exilic origin of these chapters. This position now meets with little opposition. Some critics divide the later Isaiah into several portions by different authors. Many chapters in Isaiah, i.–xxxix.,—such as xii. 12–xiv. 23, xxiv., xxxviii., xxxix.,—are assigned to writers other than Isaiah of Jerusalem.

writers; and, when given their real date, what seemed predictions lie before us as history.*

One of the best established results of Biblical scholarship is the late date of the Book of Daniel, not far from 165 B.C. It was not only written *after* the events mentioned in it: the narration is not even accurate history. It is little more than a piece of romance.† Joel must be brought down to a period after the exile; while Jonah becomes simply a beautiful prose-poem, or parable prophecy, which some place as late as 300 B.C. When the Hebrew prophets did attempt predictions in reference to the near future, they were of the nature of sagacious political forecasts, which sometimes came true. Occasionally they were recalled by their authors; often they wholly failed. The general conclusion is that those men, great in their way, had no supernatural insight into the future.‡

*See Driver, "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament," 1891.

† For proof of the unanimity of present scholarship on this point, see Schürer, "The Jewish People," Div. II. vol. iii., Eng. Tr., 1886; Stanley, History of the Jews, vol. iii., 1876; Driver, "Introduction," 1891; Sayce, *Expository Times*, p. 118, December, 1891.

‡ This subject was discussed by Kuenen, "Prophets and Prophecy in Israel," Eng. Tr., 1877, with ample learning and unanswerable logic.

The Biblical scholarship of to-day describes the Messianic hope as a human product, as natural as Greek philosophy or Roman polity. It arose among the Hebrew prophets of the eighth century before Christ, during peculiar historical conditions. It existed at first in Amos and Hosea, without any reference to a personal agent, being simply the confident expectation that the Davidic dynasty would again be raised to great power, and a reign of righteousness fill the earth. The ideal of a future king is wanting to Haggai, Joel, and Malachi; but in Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah the person of a peace-giving and prosperous ruler is described, though different tasks are assigned to him. In rank this future Messiah is always represented as purely human, simply endowed with the attributes of a human ruler. In the later Isaiah the "suffering servant" refers to the people Israel, and not to a particular

He showed clearly that even in the test case, Jeremiah's prediction of the seventy years' captivity, the outcome was not what was described. Kuenen may be said to have completely demolished the old apologetic arguments from predictive prophecy. And any one who uses them to-day simply shows how far behind the times he has fallen. This is admitted even by Professor Briggs, "Inaugural Address," p. 38, 1891. Many similar testimonies from conservative scholars might be presented.

person. In the Book of Daniel the phrase "son of man" is used as a figurative expression for the saints of the Most High.

The general conclusion of scholars is this: The Old Testament contains many expressions of great hope respecting the future of Israel, but the words *Messianic hope* are not an Old Testament phrase. The greater part of the Hebrew Scriptures contains no reference to a specific Messianic time; while, of the few hundred texts which, in a general way may be considered in some sense Messianic, not more than one-quarter refer to a personal Messiah, and all these point to a human king about to come in the time of the writer. The popular pulpit representations of this subject are absolutely erroneous. They rest upon no better foundations than false chapter headings and a most absurd interpretation of Old Testament language. There is no distant allusion to a personal Messiah in nine-tenths of the texts to which apologists appeal. Jesus was in no sense predicted by the Hebrew prophets. Even recent conservative scholars admit that such texts as those in reference to Immanuel (Isaiah vii. 14), to the

"suffering servant" (Isaiah liii.), and to the "son of man" (Daniel vii. 13), have no reference to Jesus of Nazareth. That Jesus was not the fulfilment of Hebrew Messianic hopes is evident from two facts: (1) no one person could fulfil such varied and contradictory ideals; (2) the main features of Jesus' career as given in the Gospels are unnoticed by the Hebrew prophets. Jesus himself represented the central thought of the Scriptures to be, not the Messianic hope, but the Golden Rule.*

III. In the Psalter, as we have it, about one-half of the Psalms are ascribed to King David, and nearly all the others to persons who have been supposed to be his associates. Modern investigations, however, have shown that these titles are of no critical or historical value. Biblical science finds that

* Matthew vii. 12, xxii. 34–40. This general subject of the Messianic hope is ably treated by Schürer, "The Jewish People," Div. II. vol. ii., Eng. Tr., 1885; Drummond, "The Jewish Messiah," 1877; Riehm, "Messianic Prophecy," Eng. Tr., 1890; Toy, "Judaism and Christianity," chap. vi., 1890. The significant indications that the views given above are now generally accepted are found in Wendt, "The Teaching of Jesus," vol. i. pp. 60–63, Eng. Tr., 1892; Kirkpatrick, "The Doctrine of the Prophets," 1892; Duff, "Old Testament Theology," 1891; Smith, "Old Testament in the Jewish Church," new edition, 1892. The thesis that Jesus could not and did not fulfil Hebrew prophecy, as ordinarily understood, was argued with great force by Kuenen, "The Prophets and Prophecy in Israel," Eng. Tr., 1877.

there are psalters within the Psalter; that this body of Hebrew hymns slowly grew into its present shape by a union of psalm collections, the oldest of which, Psalms i.–lxi., was made for the use of the second temple, and cannot be older than 400 B.C.; and that the great majority of all the Psalms were composed in the Persian period, 535 B.C. to 330 B.C., though some were written later, in the Greek period, while a few at least, Psalms xliv., lxxiv., lxxix., and lxxxiii., were written in the Maccabæan age. This brings the completion of the Psalter down into the second century before our era. The tendency of recent scholarship has been to lessen the number of Psalms attributed to David. Many deny the existence of any Davidic Psalms, admitting that only a few fragments from him are preserved in a few psalms, like the eighteenth.

It is safe to say that very few of the Psalms in their present shape, even if any, came from David. Professor Cheyne holds that none are earlier than the exile. The Psalter shows signs not only of having been compiled from various booklets, but also of having been very much worked over and

changed in the process of repeated re-editing. The old Messianic interpretations of the Psalms have been set aside by the investigations of recent scholars.*

IV. After about a century of research and discussion scholars of all shades of theological opinion are coming together upon certain general conclusions respecting the origin and character of the first three Gospels. There is general agreement that these writings were closely related in their origin; that they are all secondary rather than primary in character, being dependent upon common sources of information; that they all represent a slow aggregation of material rather than the reports of eye-witnesses made soon after the occurrence of the events narrated; that Matthew wrote in Aramaic a small work, called Oracles or Sayings; and that Mark, the companion of Peter, made *Notes* of the apostle's preaching. These seem to have been the first attempts to write out *memorials* of Jesus, and these were probably made thirty or forty

* The results of modern discoveries in this department are given by Cheyne, "The Origin of the Psalter," Bampton Lectures, 1889; Smith, "Old Testament in the Jewish Church," new edition, 1892; and Driver, "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament," 1891.

years after the crucifixion. Just what these primitive documents contained we cannot definitely tell, though many suppose that our Mark is very near the original *Notes* composed by the disciple of that name. Nearly all scholars now conclude that our Mark, somewhat enlarged from the original *Notes*, by use of oral tradition and possibly the Oracles of Matthew, is the oldest of our Gospels, finished in its present shape, with the exception of the resurrection supplement (xvi. 9–20), a late addition (see Revised Version), not far from the year A.D. 80. There are apostolic *memories* here, some things possibly written before the fall of Jerusalem, A.D. 70; but at best this is a second-hand rather than an original report. It was made with most honest intent to reflect the image and communicate the spirit of Jesus, and for this purpose it is invaluable; but it necessarily bears traces of its human origin, and contains the limitations inevitable in such a production.

Some ten years later, with this, the Oracles of Matthew, and some other documents before him, Luke sat down, and compiled our third Gospel. He explains his

method briefly (Luke i. 1–4); and he certainly claims even by implication no more for his production than general historical accuracy. Some ten years later another editor, with these sources of information before him, and probably independent traditions, oral or written, not used by his predecessors, composed our first Gospel, which, from the large use made of Matthew's Oracles, continued to be known as the "Gospel according to Matthew."* In this Gospel there are many duplications and repetitions, showing that the editor freely copied from various sources of information; while in his work, as a rule, the legends are more developed, for there had been a longer time for wonder-loving fancy to do its work.

It will be noticed that, according to these conclusions, none of our first three Gospels represents, in its present shape, an apostolic work, while all are products of compilation, — not original records, but literary products, which were in the process of growth for some years. This theory explains their remarkable similarities — one-third of the

* Some great scholars still arrange these Gospels in a different order, but the above statements represent the present tendencies of scholarship.

material is common to all — by the fact that all copied from the same documents at times, and also the earlier from the later; and it explains their new matter and contradictions by the fact that each editor sometimes used new documents and sometimes made editorial changes as he copied from these common sources. Writings so produced would naturally contain legends, and the presence of legendary elements is now freely admitted by conservatives.*

V. The Fourth Gospel is still the centre of sharp discussion and conflicting views. On account of its intimate association with certain theological dogmas, many still resist the conclusions of scientific criticism at this point. For a half-century and more a long line of eminent scholars have been insisting that the Gospel is a theologi-

* The best popular expositions in English of scholarship in this department are: Carpenter, "The Synoptic Gospels," 1890; Cone, "Gospel Criticism and Historical Christianity," 1891. The history and present position of scholarship are fully described by Pfleiderer, "Development of Theology," 1890; Sanday, "The Synoptic Problem," the *Expositor*, 1891. The evidence of the wide acceptance of these conclusions by conservatives — even the admission of the presence of legends — may be found in Evans and Smith, "Inspiration and Biblical Scholarship," 1891; Horton, "Revelation and the Bible," 1892; Ladd, "What is the Bible?" 1890; Toy, "Judaism and Christianity," pp. 350–365, 1890; Wilson, "Address at Church Congress," Rhyl, 1891, Report, p. 152.

cal treatise rather than an historical record; not that it is wholly unhistorical, but that historical materials were used freely by the author as the mere platform on which to place a dogma. Here the historical figure of Jesus is set in the framework of the Alexandrian doctrine of the Logos, or Word; and the story is told under the stress of this philosophical idea, in order to convert people to the belief that Jesus was the incarnate Logos. This purpose the author himself plainly declares (John i. 1–5, xx. 31). We do not accuse the writer of intentional falsehood. We ought not to set aside all in his pages as romance; but, in view of the evident dogmatic purpose, we must not go to this Gospel for the mind of Jesus. We see him moving at a distance as we read, and we hear echoes of his teaching; but many an incident has been reshaped to produce a theological impression, and many speeches have been put into his mouth which do not contain his thought, but the speculation of a philosopher about him. The writer, doing his work about A.D. 125, may, as Wendt and others contend, have had before him *notes* left by the apostle

John, and to this may be due the association of this name with the Gospel. But the prologue introduces us to a realm foreign to the thought of Jesus; and the monologue (chapters xiv.–xvii.), with some remarkably noble passages, cannot be accepted as a report of Jesus' teaching.*

Hardly any other subject is so commonly misrepresented by popular orthodox writers as the present position and tendency of scholarship in reference to the date and authorship of this Gospel. Even scholars of ability make the most erroneous statements about this subject. I have made a very careful and thorough examination of the facts in this department, trying to take an exhaustive *census* of the great scholars who have written on this topic; and I have been over-generous toward the conservative side. I can only give the results here; and they are as follows: In the

*The opposition to the Johannine authorship of the Gospel culminated in Keim, whose argument remains unshaken,—"Jesus of Nazara," vol. i., Eng. Tr., 1873. Probably the best thing in English is Schürer, "The Fourth Gospel," in the *Contemporary Review*, September, 1891, which gives a history of this problem and the reasons against the traditional opinion. Davidson, "Introduction," vol. ii., 1882, and Reuss, "History of the New Testament," vol. i., Am. Tr., 1884, are both able authorities. Martineau, "Seat of Authority in Religion," 1890, is valuable as an opinion, but not strong as an argument.

period of thirty years ending in 1860, of the fifty great authorities in this line, *four to one* were in favor of the Johannine authorship. Of those who in that period had advocated the traditional position, *one-fourth* — and certainly the very greatest — finally changed their position to the side of a late date and non-Johannine authorship, — a very significant fact. Of those who have come into this field of scholarship since about 1860, some forty first-class men, *two-thirds* reject the traditional theory wholly or very largely. Of those who have contributed important articles to this discussion within the past ten years, *about two to one* reject the Johannine authorship of the Gospel in its present shape; that is to say, while forty years ago great scholars were *four to one in favor*, they are now *two to one against* the claim that the apostle John wrote this Gospel as we have it. Again, one-half of those on the conservative side to-day, scholars like Weiss, Beyschlag, Sanday, and Reynolds, admit the existence of a dogmatic intent and an ideal element in this Gospel, so that we do not have Jesus' thought in his exact words, but only its

substance,—a very remarkable concession.* How any one can say in the face of these facts that the early date and authenticity of the Gospel have been conclusively established by the most recent scholarship is to me most astonishing.† The progress of religion is largely bound up with this problem; for, in my opinion, there can be no rational view of Jesus until the dogmatic and unhistorical character of this writing is accepted. This theosophical misconception of Jesus must be swept away before the real Gospel of Jesus can come into authority. This must disappear before the most helpful ministry of Jesus can arise.

VI. In the last few years much light has been shed upon the *canon* of the Bible,

*I hope very soon to treat this problem at length, and give a bill of particulars in place of these general statements.

†The opinions of four Germans on the tendency of scholarship respecting this Gospel are decisive in the line of the statements here made: Pfleiderer, "Development of Theology," 1890; Holtzmann, "Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament," 1890,—the Introduction to the Fourth Gospel; Harnack, "Das Neue Testament um das Jahr 200," 1889; Schürer, "The Fourth Gospel," *Contemporary Review*, September, 1891. As significant as anything are the concessions to historical criticism made by such conservatives as Sanday, "Schürer on the Fourth Gospel," *Contemporary Review*, October, 1891; Watkins, "Modern Criticism of the Fourth Gospel," 1890; and Bruce, "Apologetics," 1892.

upon the influences and processes by which this collection of writings was slowly made, the causes which operated in transforming these pieces of literature into sacred Scripture, in turning mere documents into an authoritative revelation. The discoveries respecting the non-Mosaic origin and slow compilation of the Pentateuch have given a new character to this problem, and have located its beginning at a new date. The Deuteronomic code, under Josiah, 621 B.C., was in some respects the first step among the Hebrews toward making a document a rule of life for the individual and the community. But it was not until Ezra, 444 B.C., that this *historico-legal* treatise was completed, and made into Scripture, a document with divine authority. The Hexateuch then became a rule of life, and this was the first part of our Bible to become *canonical*. In the synagogues the works of the prophets were now read with ardor for instruction. Use slowly made selection of what were most valuable, and surrounded these with increasing sanctity. This process continued for some time; but, probably by about 200 B.C. this second body of writ-

ings, the prophetic canon, was raised to the rank of Scripture, though doubts about the right to include Ezekiel and Jonah continued until after Jesus' time. This collection contained, besides what we call prophecies, historical works, such as Samuel and Kings.

But there were other useful writings which could not be put under this head; and they began to be grouped about the growing Psalter, such works as Proverbs, Job, and later on Ecclesiastes. Use for religious purposes slowly built another collection, and sanctified it, again transforming literature into Scripture. This was known as the Kethubim, or Writings. The lines were not here drawn clearly until near the rise of Christianity. Still Bible-building went on. A fourth collection started with Ecclesiasticus, the Wisdom of Solomon, and 1 Maccabees at the head, really deserving works, but modern and more Greek than Hebrew. Thus arose the *Apocrypha*, a body of writings that, for various historical reasons, just failed to become Scripture, at one time much prized by the early Church, finally cast aside by the Jews, favorably

considered by the Catholics at the Council of Trent, but rejected by Protestant divines as non-Scriptural. In Jesus' time these three collections, each by itself, were viewed, as among Jews to-day, with different feelings, — the Law with supreme reverence as a final revelation, the Prophets and the Writings as commentaries upon the Law, sacred, but not so divine.

Three things will here be observed: —

(1) All these writings existed for a long time as literature before they became Scripture. None was set forth by its author as a revelation. None was considered authoritative or used as a rule of life until long after its production. (2) It was only slowly, and simply by general usage and common consent, that each work was lifted to the rank of Scripture; slowly that each successive canonical collection was built up, closed, and lifted to something like equality with its predecessor. No council of leaders and scholars passed upon these problems. There is nowhere in the history of the process any evidence of the operation of anything but public opinion. (3) The existence of wide-spread and long-continued

doubts respecting many of these writings shows how human a process was the building of the Bible. There was decided resistance to the efforts of Ezra, when he made the Hexateuch the law of Judaism. Ecclesiastes was put in and Ecclesiasticus kept out more by accident than intrinsic worth. There was long and serious opposition to Ezekiel, and both Esther and the Song of Songs were subject to doubt as late as A.D. 100.*

The canon of the New Testament illustrates the operation of the same forces. Jesus and his apostles apparently had no thought that another body of Scripture would be produced. For over a century after the crucifixion the Christians made no use of anything but the Hebrew Bible as Scripture. In none of the New Testament writings, except the Apocalypse, is there any intimation that it is to be used as Scripture. The first to make a new collection of sacred writings was the Gnostic heretic, Marcion, about A.D. 140, and he was led to this primarily on account of his

* We have at last *a classic* on the growth of the Hebrew Bible,—Ryle, "The Canon of the Old Testament," 1892.

opposition to things Jewish and by his rejection of the Old Testament; but Marcion attributed no infallibility to the writings which he thus collected, — a Gospel similar to our Luke and some of Paul's letters. Writers about A.D. 150, like Justin, Papias, Hermas, and others, appeal to nothing in our New Testament as Scripture.*

During the last half of the second century certain Gospels, ours and others, come into view, first as mere literary records, then as writings with a sacred character akin to the Hebrew Bible. Theophilus, about A.D. 180, made, so far as we know, the first *quotation* of our four Gospels as Scripture. By the close of the century these had been especially selected and placed by themselves as a *Gospel canon*. This was slowly brought about, not by careful examination or the decision of a council, but by common usage and the influence of three

* Apologetic writers, even men of large ability, often make, at this point, two mistakes. The existence of sayings of Jesus, or allusions to incidents in his life, in writings of the early part of the second century, similar to what are found in our four Gospels, is no proof that they were taken from these Gospels; for two other sources of information existed, — oral tradition and other written Gospels. Another inference often made is equally illogical, for proof that an early writer used or quoted one of our Gospels is no proof that he used it as Scripture, which is often asserted.

great church leaders,— Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. And yet these men gave the most absurd reasons for the selection of these particular Gospels. Thus by A.D. 200 the Gospel canon was practically closed, though other similar writings, the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of the Egyptians, and others, continued to exist for many years.

The growth of a Catholic Church necessitated a new body of authoritative Christian Scriptures, and before the Gospel canon was closed another collection began to form, *the Apostles;* and here for a long time the lines were hard to draw. Respecting some things, Acts and the majority of Paul's letters, unanimity was soon reached; but about many writings Origen, as late as A.D. 240, could appeal to no general usage or decisive decision. Nor could Eusebius a century later; while the words of Jerome, about A.D. 420, show the existence of doubts in his day respecting 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude. Jerome found it difficult to decide upon Hebrews and Revelation, and he testifies to the public use of the Epistle of

Clement as Scripture. Hebrews and Revelation were subject to many changes of public opinion during the third and fourth centuries. The Epistles of James and Jude only very slowly gained favor. Three writings, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Epistles of Barnabas and Clement, widely read in public and quoted as Scripture during the second century, finally dropped out of sight. Other writings, like the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Acts of Paul, and the Sibylline Oracles, were used as Scripture by eminent church leaders in the third century.

These facts show that the New Testament collection grew to its present shape very slowly. Many writings were long held in doubt. Some were finally excluded that had at one time been very popular. Respecting others opinions changed several times from age to age. A few barely won their place more by accident than design or intrinsic worth. This process of selection was purely natural and historical. The decisive factor was common usage. No competent scholar guided, no general council decided. The common assertion that this problem was settled at the Council

of Nicæa is an error. In the main, usage probably decided wisely; but there is not a trace of any supernatural superintendence.*

These are a few of the most prominent and best-established conclusions of modern scholarship which have helped to give us a new Bible. There are others that can barely be mentioned here: that Proverbs is a slowly aggregated body of wise sayings, completed probably in the fourth century before our era, with which Solomon had no connection; that the work called Chronicles, belonging at about 300 B.C., is "a religious romance rather than sober history"; † that Acts is a compilation made at the beginning of the second century by one who used older documents, but did not remove all contradictions in them or discriminate carefully between history and legend; that Revelation is probably a composite work, the foundation being a Jewish Apocalypse, written just before the fall of Jerusalem, A.D. 70, to which a Christian writer

* We are still without a classic on the canon of the New Testament, such as Ryle's book on the Old Testament canon. But the main facts are accessible to the English reader in Davidson, "The Canon of the Bible," 1878, and in Reuss, "History of the New Testament," vol. ii., Am. Tr., 1884. Also, in Westcott's more conservative work.

† Toy, "Judaism and Christianity," p. 56, 1890.

fifty years later added the opening and closing portions and various interpolations in the body of the work, and, according to this view, the apostle John had nothing to do with it. Of the Epistles once attributed to Paul, 1 Timothy, Titus, and Ephesians are now assigned to other writers during the first quarter of the second century; 2 Timothy, 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, and even Philippians are not considered the works of Paul by many very able scholars; while there is now unanimity that Hebrews is not from him. It is held that 2 Peter, not by the apostle, is the latest writing in the New Testament, being a product of the last half of the second century, and it is very doubtful whether 1 Peter in its present shape came from the hand of the chief apostle.

It is evident at a glance that these discoveries do give us a new Bible. They compel a restatement of the doctrine of inspiration, and they make necessary a radical change in our use of the Bible. Conservatives are coming to realize this situation very clearly. Professor Kirkpatrick, of the University of Cambridge, an

able scholar, uses this significant language: "In what sense, it is asked, can this legislation, which is now said to be Mosaic in elemental germ and idea only, and to represent not the inspired deliverance of a supremely great individual, but the painful efforts of many generations of law-makers; these histories, which have been compiled from primitive traditions and chronicles and annals and what not; these books of prophecy, which are not the authentic autographs of the prophets, but posthumous collections of such writings, if any, as they left behind them, eked out by the recollections of their disciples; these Proverbs and Psalms, which have been handed down by tradition, and altered and edited and re-edited; these histories, which contain errors of date and fact, and have been perhaps *idealized* by the reflection of the circumstances and ideas of the writer's own times upon a distant past; these seeming narratives, which may be allegories; and these would-be prophecies, which may be histories,— in what sense can these be said to be *inspired?*" * This is a graphic statement of conclusions now gen-

* Kirkpatrick, "Divine Library of the Old Testament," p. 88, 1891.

erally held, and also a frank acknowledgment that the old doctrine of revelation is no longer tenable.

It would be easy to mass together a hundred similar confessions from prominent conservative scholars in church and university to the effect that these critical views of the Bible are now widely held, and that recent discoveries have made a new theory of inspiration absolutely necessary. Among the many remarkable statements recently made in this connection, none is more interesting than this from a very prominent scholar, who, since writing these words, has been elevated to a higher place in his church in Scotland, showing that there such views occasion no alarm,— in itself a significant fact: "To Isaiah inspiration was nothing more nor less than the possession of certain strong moral and religious convictions, which he felt he owed to the communication of the spirit of God, and according to which he interpreted, and even dared to foretell, the history of his people and the world. Our study completely dispels, on the evidence of the Bible itself, that view of inspiration and prediction so

long held in the Church."* Here is the important truth. The facts furnished by the Bible itself make it necessary to change both our view and our use of it.

What, then, is the new Bible? It is the product, undoubtedly the highest product, of man's Bible-making capacity. We must place it in connection with other sacred Scriptures of the race, and, though superior, its superiority is due to purely historical causes; for into it have flowed the riches from a remarkable group of great peoples. The Bible is the literary product of the religious spirit in one of its noblest manifestations. It is the reflection rather than the source of man's religious life; the history of one line of religious revolution, not the cause of piety; a record of *some* of God's dealings with mankind. As such, it is of great value; but it must be studied freely as literature for increase of life, not as a final statement of religious truth for creed-building. The new Bible is the old Bible allowed to tell its own story, to shine in its own light, to occupy its real place in the religious history of humanity. The new

*Smith, "The Book of Isaiah," vol. i. p. 372, 1890.

Bible is the old Bible viewed in the light of all recent discoveries, taken as a religious classic rather than as a supernatural revelation, to be used, not as a rigid rule, but as a book of human experience to impart to us hope and holiness.

The new Bible is the old Bible honored as *one* of the torches of truth, but not worshipped as the only luminary in our heavens. It is a pasture where the soul is to feed freely, not a prison in which to confine thought. Its chapters are not blinders to be worn to shut out visions of truth and beauty now unfolding, but lenses through which we may gain clearer views of certain great laws of the spirit. The new Bible must be put to new uses. Its texts must be used, not as hitching-posts to which thought is to be tied, but as fuel for the altar fires of the heart.

ERRORS IN THE BIBLE.

TOPICS.

1. The Spirit of this Discussion.
2. History and Character of the Old Testament Text.
3. What the Septuagint proves.
4. The New Testament Text Uncertain.
5. Errors Illustrated.
6. The Bible and Science.
7. Specific Scientific Errors.
8. Genesis and Geology.
9. What Historical Research does for the Bible.
10. Not all its Statements confirmed.
11. Confusion respecting the Real Problem.
12. Legends in the Bible.
13. Contradictions in Scripture.
14. Mistakes of New Testament Writers in using the Old.
15. No Unity in the Bible.

ERRORS IN THE BIBLE.

THE SPIRIT OF THIS DISCUSSION.

THE unwise friends of the Bible drive the modern scholar to the uncongenial task of describing the errors of Scripture. The false claims made for the Bible by churchmen have been its worst enemies. When it is insisted that we must believe every text in it in order to be saved, then many are forced into a search for its errors and absurdities, which often ends in a total neglect of the Bible. When it is demanded, Believe all or reject all, many turn from it, and neglect even the good in it. The irrational use made of it by ministers begets the irreverent use made of it by sceptics. The unreason of a Hengstenberg provoked the criticism of a Colenso. The absurdities of a Talmage create the ridicule of an Ingersoll. Weeds in a pasture do not destroy it, but a herdsman would be very foolish to try to make his cattle eat them. But this

is what the shepherds of the Church have tried to do,— to make us eat everything in this ancient literary pasture, and call it divine. This is an injustice to the Bible and an injury to man; for it applies a false standard to the Bible, and it drives men away from its real nourishment. They say, If I must eat everything, then I will not feed there at all. Children taught a rational use of the Bible do not become infidels.

It is a misfortune that so much time is worse than wasted in defending views of Scripture that are indefensible, that create in the modern mind a prejudice against the Bible, and that compel men in self-defence to catalogue its imperfections. If advocates of tradition would cease their opposition to the light, there would be no more scorn for the mistakes of Moses than for the errors of Plato. When the day of dogmatism closes, then all attacks upon the Bible will cease. They are wise who, neither dwelling upon its incidental errors nor shutting their eyes to them, make its plea for reverence and righteousness, for love, mercy, and justice, alive in their own conduct. More impor-

tant than any contention for a dogmatic theory about it is that sympathetic but rational use of it which shall make the presence of God more powerfully felt and our moral obligations more grandly lived. And, if we turn aside to display its errors, it is not to attack the Bible, but to destroy false views of it, that the true Bible may be seen and that the soul may be protected from needless injury.

And, in support of the position here taken, let appeal be made to two witnesses, whose words spring from a deep love of both religion and the Bible. Dr. James Freeman Clarke wrote: "To say that every statement in the Bible comes directly from God produces wide-spread unbelief. A large part of the scepticism and infidelity of the present time may be traced directly to this source. Men are taught from a thousand pulpits that they are not Christians unless they believe the Bible wholly true from Genesis to Revelation. But they cannot believe this. Therefore, they think they are not Christians." * Not less weighty and significant are the words of

* Clarke, "Vexed Questions in Theology," p. 145, 1886.

Professor Charles A. Briggs: "It [the dogma of the inerrancy of Scripture] imperils the faith of all Christians who have been taught this doctrine. They cannot escape the evidence of errors in the Scriptures. This evidence will be thrust upon them, whether they will or not. They must either shut their eyes or give up their doctrine of inspiration. If they have no better doctrine to put in its place, their faith in the Bible will be destroyed. What an awful doctrine to teach in our days, when Biblical criticism has the field!"* Whoever makes a false claim for the Bible so far discredits and destroys the Bible; and it is the part of friendship to uncover the real Bible, with all its limitations. Exaggerated praise always reacts against a public man. To know the exact truth is strength and prosperity.

We take interest in showing the errors of the Bible in friendship to the Bible. We have faith that the real Bible will be loved and used. The quickest way to stop attacks upon Scripture is to surrender our false claims for it; and, in all our study of this

* Briggs, "Whither?" p. 73, 1889.

subject, we must remember that the matter of supreme importance is not what is best for the Bible, but what is best for the soul of man. To show how easy it is to keep one's piety and also one's love of the Bible, while frankly admitting its errors, let me quote from one of the last utterances of Delitzsch, a man as great in his reverence as in his scholarship: "Certainly, Holy Scripture is not a book which has fallen from heaven. On the contrary, the self-testimony therein given to the Divine is affected by all the marks of human, individual, local, temporal, and educational diversity."* A document without errors may be needed to fulfil the requirements of an infallible revelation; but such a document we do not have in Scripture, and the sooner the real Bible is accepted, and used for what it is, the sooner can we drop all references to its errors, and turn with one accord to its lessons of life.

*Delitzsch, "New Commentary on Genesis," Eng. Tr., vol. i. p. 55, 1889.

HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TEXT.

I. *Uncertainties of the Text.*— Probably the belief of the general reader is something like this: Our English Bible is a translation of texts, Hebrew and Greek, which exactly represent the manuscripts of the several works just as they came from the hands of the inspired authors; that is, Moses, Isaiah, Matthew, Paul, and others, wrote under the immediate dictation of the Almighty, and the text, just as they wrote it out, is that from which our translation was made, for God watched over it, and "by his singular care and providence kept [it] pure in all ages." * And yet nothing could be farther from the truth than this popular impression.

Look for a moment at a few facts respecting the most ancient text of the Old Testament. Our oldest Hebrew manuscripts are not much older than the Norman conquest, nearly two thousand years later than the original composition of many of these works. These are all in a uniform shape,

* Westminster Confession, i. 8.

called the *Massoretic* text, because they have certain accents and vowel points that were invented and attached to the Hebrew letters by a school of Jewish scribes called *Massoretes*, who began their work after the rise of Christianity. The ancient Hebrew was a strictly *consonantal* language, only the *consonants* of a word being set down or represented by letters. The reader was expected to supply the proper vowel sounds.

But, as Hebrew ceased to be a living language, it became more difficult for the reader to do this. For instance, the same consonants,— to use an illustration in English,— brn, might mean barn, born, or burn, according as one or another vowel sound is supplied. Therefore, very naturally it became quite uncertain in many cases what the original meaning really was, there being nothing but the context, or general meaning of the passage, to indicate what vowel sounds ought to be supplied.

Thus it happened that about the time of Christ many controversies sprang up respecting the true reading of a great number of these consonantal or half-written words. So that, in order to fix the meaning once

for all and relieve readers of these perplexities, a school of scribes, the Massoretes, invented certain points, and placed them under the consonants of the word, to show its pronunciation and meaning. Certain accents were also added to indicate grammatical connections and elocutionary effects. By these additions the ancient purely consonantal text, in which all the Old Testament was written and preserved until long after the time of Jesus, was transformed into the Massoretic text of all our Hebrew manuscripts, from which our translations are made. This secured a fixed and established text, so that all our Hebrew manuscripts, made after this process was completed, are very similar.

But it took a long time for the Massoretes to solve all the difficulties of the text which existed in their day. They were many centuries toiling at this task, and the time employed and the number of scribes engaged prove how great were the uncertainties and how decided the differences of opinion respecting the readings of various passages. Their work can only very imperfectly be followed; and we know but very

little of the grounds of their final decision, — why, for example, *hammittah* was chosen in Genesis xlvii. 31, making it mean *the bed*, instead of *hammatteh*, or *staff*, words which have the same consonants, but different vowels. Of the reasons for such decisions we know very little. The conclusion of Dr. W. Robertson Smith is just: "Many various readings once existed in manuscripts of the Old Testament, which have totally disappeared from the extant Hebrew copies." * The situation was in brief this: The Old Testament writings, existing in a *consonantal language*, became obscure and uncertain in places, as Hebrew ceased to be spoken. Vowel sounds were supplied in one way by some and in another way by others, giving to the same words different pronunciations, and also different meanings. To decide respecting these disputed readings of the text, the school of the Massoretes worked for many centuries, completing their task as late as A.D. 800; and the result of their labors we have in the only Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament which we possess.

* Smith, "Old Testament in the Jewish Church," p. 97, 1881.

The Old Testament text, therefore, simply represents, in many places at least, the decisions which they finally made; *and it has no higher authority than the mere opinions of men.* That it reads in many cases as it does rather than in a radically different way is due solely and simply to the judgment of those fallible Massoretes. They probably worked honestly and to the best of their ability; but we know enough of them to see that they were very imperfect, and we know enough of their work to understand that the final decision respecting a word or a text was sometimes made under great difficulties, and often in face of decided opposition. So that we can put our finger on many a text in the Old Testament, and say with perfect truth, This reads in this rather than in some other way, simply because those Massoretes decided from very conflicting evidence to set it down in this shape.

And not only did they have to decide respecting the vowel sounds to be supplied, upon which the meaning of the word hung, but, far more than this, they had to decide upon the relative value of different manu-

scripts; for the manuscripts before them varied very materially. Our text of the Old Testament is, then, a product of the judgment of the Massoretes. It can have no higher authority than that given to it by their general ability. And on this point I appeal again to Dr. Smith: "This, at least, we can say: that, if they fixed for us a satisfactory text, the scribes did not do so in virtue of any great critical skill which they possessed in comparing manuscripts and selecting the best readings. They worked from a false point of view. Their objects were legal, not philological. Their defective philology, their bad system of interpretation, made them bad critics." * And yet, in very many places our Old Testament reads as it does as a result of their decisions.

Surely, certain things are evident: (1) These writings of the Old Testament, as we have them to-day, while probably substantially in the shape that they left the hands of their authors, have suffered very many corruptions of their text. The very existence of a school to purify and fix the

* Smith, "Old Testament in the Jewish Church," p. 76, 1881.

text, — the Massoretes,* — and the length and difficulty of their work, prove the extent of such corruptions and uncertainties. That errors have crept in, that changes have been made, that our text is different from the original as it came from the pen of the writer, is certain.

(2) To claim infallible and divine authority for a document whose text was so manufactured, — this or that reading accepted, this or that meaning given to certain groups of consonants, by the majority vote of uncritical scholars, — this is surely most irrational. The text is good enough for all legitimate religious and literary purposes, but there is no evidence that any providential care watched over it and insured its purity. The facts show the exact opposite, and such a text is not what would and must belong to an infallible revelation.

WHAT THE SEPTUAGINT PROVES.

There are several other lines of facts, which show that changes crept into the text

*For an account of the Massoretes and their work, the "Massorah," see an article in the *British Quarterly*, vol. lxxiii. p. 310. Spelled there *Masora*. The authoritative work is Ginsburg, "The Massorah," 1880–83.

of the Old Testament writings during the process of transmission in ancient times: the differences between our Massoretic text and the quotations from the original Hebrew, or an Aramaic version, which are preserved in Jewish and Christian writings that belong to the early ages of Christianity,— differences that prove that a text different from ours was then used; differences between late Greek versions like that of Aquila and our own text; and, far more important, the differences between our Hebrew text and the *Septuagint*, that translation of the Old Testament into Greek made in the period 275–130 B.C. But I can here only very briefly allude to the latter. We have every reason to suppose that this Greek version, the Septuagint, produced for the use of Greek-speaking Jews, was carefully made from some well-known Hebrew manuscript or manuscripts.

Now, there are decided differences between the Septuagint and the Hebrew text which we possess. The situation has been very clearly set forth by a recent writer, who is a competent scholar, Professor Kirkpatrick: "That version differs very con-

siderably from the present Hebrew text. Thus, for example, in Samuel there are considerable omissions; in Kings and in Proverbs there are considerable additions. The prophecies of Jeremiah are arranged in a different order. Some of the variations of the Septuagint from the Hebrew text are due, no doubt, to errors and interpolations and deliberate alterations; but, after all allowance has been made for them, I do not see how any candid critic can resist the conclusion that many of them represent variations existing in the Hebrew text from which the translation was made. . . . What we have to observe here is that the Septuagint gives positive evidence that different recensions of the Hebrew text existed in this period. The Massoretic text may be regarded as representing the text current in Palestine, while the Septuagint [made in Alexandria] represents that in use in Egypt." * Some of these differences let me briefly illustrate. In our Hebrew, or Massoretic, text, 2 Sam. xvii. 3 reads thus: "I will bring back all the people to thee.

* Kirkpatrick, "The Divine Library of the Old Testament," p. 62, 1891. See, also, Abbott, "Original Texts of the Old and New Testaments," chaps. i., ii., 1892.

Like the return of the whole is the man whom thou seekest. All the people shall have peace." But in the Septuagint the same verse reads: "I will make all the people turn to thee as a bride turneth to her husband. Thou seekest the life of but one man, and all the people shall have peace."

In the following passage the words in *Italics* represent the differences between our Hebrew text and the Septuagint; that is, these were added to the passage as it reads in Greek: "For thus saith the Lord *of hosts concerning the pillars and the sea and the bases*, and the rest of the vessels left in this city, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took not, when he carried Jeconiah, *son of Jehoiakim king of Judah*, captive from Jerusalem *to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem; for, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels left in the house of God, and in the house of the king of Judah and Jerusalem;* they shall be taken to Babylon, *and there shall they be unto the day that I visit them*, saith the Lord; *then will I bring them up and restore them to this place.*" (Jeremiah xxvii. 19–22.) Drop out the *Itali-*

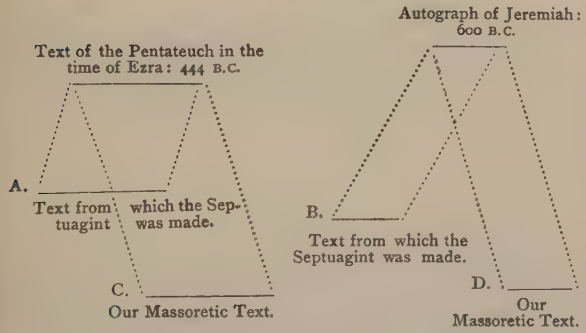
cized words, and we have what we find in the Septuagint,—the simple statement of a fact. This undoubtedly represents the standard Hebrew text as it existed about 300 B.C.; but the words in *Italics* represent what were added by copyists in later ages to amplify the record and exaggerate the prophecy, *for in the Septuagint the prophet is not represented as alluding to the return.*

These facts show most conclusively: (1) that, when the Greek translation was made, great differences existed in the various Hebrew manuscripts then in existence; or (2) that great changes were made in the Hebrew text which is represented in our manuscripts.* Probably both statements are true to a certain extent. The Hebrew manuscripts differed very considerably as early as 300 B.C., while changes were made after that date; and these appear in our Massoretic text. However this may be, a comparison of our Hebrew manuscripts and the Septuagint proves the uncertainty which surrounds the text of the Old Testament. These differences are less in the Pentateuch than in the historical and prophetical books,

* Buhl, "Canon and Text of the Old Testament," Eng. Tr., p. 244, 1892.

because the greater sanctity which then surrounded the former secured greater care, and prohibited the taking of so great liberties with the text. In other words, the very condition of the text shows the operation of only natural and historical influences. Where veneration played upon the text, there the most care was taken and the fewest differences exist; but, where writings were less revered, the text has been more freely altered.*

A graphic illustration of these facts may be made in the following manner: —


Text of the Pentateuch in the time of Ezra: 444 B.C.
A.
Text from which the Septuagint was made.
C.
Our Massoretic Text.
Autograph of Jeremiah: 600 B.C.
B.
Text from which the Septuagint was made.
D.
Our Massoretic Text.

*The Septuagint was the Bible of the early Church, and from it the New Testament writers, as a rule, made their quotations; and the differences between these quotations from the Old Testament in the New, and the parallel texts in our Old Testament, translated from the Hebrew, or Massoretic, text, which have attracted the attention of all

These diagrams show in a crude fashion the conclusions of our best scholars respecting this subject. The few variations in the Septuagint from the text of the Pentateuch, as used by Ezra, are shown by placing the line A somewhat to the left. Another line of changes was being made in those manuscripts which are represented by our Massoretic text, and this is shown by placing the line C farther to the right. The differences in position of the lines A and C indicate the textual differences between the Pentateuch of the Septuagint and the Pentateuch in our Hebrew manuscripts. The greater divergence of B and D from the top line represents the greater number of changes in the text of Jeremiah; while the distance between B and D indicates, as the passage just quoted illustrates, the greater textual differences between the Jeremiah of the Septuagint and the Jeremiah of our Massoretic text. The conclusion of Dr. Buhl is in point: "We have sure witnesses to prove that in the time before Christ a

careful readers, illustrate and prove the position here taken. Compare, for example, the quotation in Matthew xiii. 14, 15, and Isaiah vi. 9, 10. Matthew is here identical with the Septuagint, while our Old Testament represents the Hebrew Massoretic text.

form of text did exist which diverged considerably from the one we now possess." *

Enough has surely been said — and this is all that is here attempted — to show: (1) that the Hebrew text from which our translation of the Old Testament is made is far removed from the original autographs of the authors who wrote and compiled these writings. (2) That there is nowhere any evidence of a special providential care in the preservation and transmission of the text. The text of Scripture has been subject to the human limitations displayed in the texts of all other writings. Mistakes, changes, and corruptions were made in it, as everywhere else, though the sacred character of Scripture *naturally* preserved it in a purer state than that of ordinary literature. (3) Great uncertainty attaches to many passages. We have ample evidence to prove that their present was not their original reading, and the form of the text which we possess was fixed in its present shape by fallible men in the midst of conflicting opinions and doubtful traditions;

* Buhl, "Canon and Text of the Old Testament," Eng. Tr., p. 255, 1892.

and, however adequate for all reasonable purposes, its authority is no higher than the judgment of ordinary scholars in an uncritical age, who were simply trying to do their best.

Even so conservative a man as Dr. J. Paterson Smyth of Trinity College, Dublin, admits as much as this in that little book which contains much useful information, "The Old Documents and the New Bible": "That the whole Old Testament together was at any period absolutely word for word as it left the hands of the writers no one who understands its history will venture to say." * And yet, if an infallible revelation, it ought to be "absolutely word for word as it left the hands of its writers."

HOW THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT IS MADE.

The text of the New Testament is no more free from errors and uncertainties than that of the Old. What we call King James's version, made in 1611, and almost universally read among English-speaking Protestants, is the translation of a Greek text,

* Smyth, "The Old Documents and the New Bible," p. 67, 1890.

called without very much propriety the *Textus Receptus*, or received text.* Probably many have supposed that this Greek text, from which our English translation was made, is a perfect copy of some ancient manuscript, which exactly represents just what the apostles themselves wrote; but this is very far from the truth. There is no ancient manuscript now known, none was ever in existence, that reads just like that Textus Receptus.

The Greek text from which our common version was translated is *a modern manufacture* somewhat unlike the apostolic autographs. The Textus Receptus is a product of the scholarship of the sixteenth century, to which the justly celebrated Erasmus probably contributed more than any one else. It was constructed from all the material then in hand, but it is a construction of human scholarship, often walking in the dark and with uncertain steps, rather than the product of supernatural revelation; and, while it gives us the apostolic

*For an account of the process by which the Textus Receptus was produced see Reuss, "The History of the New Testament," Am. Tr., vol. ii., §§ 395–404, 1884.

writings substantially as first composed, yet it is not from beginning to end the transcript of any ancient manuscript or version, while many differences separate it from the autograph originals as they left the hands of the writers themselves.

This Textus Receptus *was put together* or *built up* in this way: Those scholars of the sixteenth century brought together for use all the ancient manuscripts and versions within reach, chiefly using, however, the Latin Vulgate and the Complutensian Polyglot.* Their critical apparatus was very limited. As verse after verse of the New Testament, in each of these *sources*, was compared with the readings in all the other versions and manuscripts, differences in many cases were found. In other words, no two of these documents read just alike all the way through. In places one had a verse more than another, again a verse less, sometimes an almost wholly different verse. In places the order of words in a sentence was different. Again, different words were found in parallel verses, sometimes so different as to change the meaning.

*See Smith's Bible Dictionary for an interesting account of the Vulgate.

These differences proved that all these versions and manuscripts had departed from the original text more or less. And what scholars did was this: When they came to a verse where various differences of reading existed in their authorities, they studied the problem carefully,* and decided the best they could from the evidence before them which reading to adopt; and this they set down as their text. And so they went on from verse to verse, writing as their text now what they found in one authority and then what they found in some other version or manuscript. Thus they built up our Textus Receptus, putting into it what they decided to be the best readings, now from one and then from another source.

For instance, when we look at Matthew xix. 17, we find that the Greek is τί με λέγεις ἀγαθόν; οὐδεὶς ἀγαθὸς, εἰ μὴ εἷς, ὁ θεός, or, in English: "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God." But it is found that the oldest and best authorities give the Greek thus: τί με ἐρωτᾶς περὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ; εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ ἀγαθός, or, in English:

*"Carefully" is probably too strong a word. Reuss calls Erasmus's edition a "hastily prepared" work, "History of the New Testament," Am. Tr., vol. ii. p. 411, 1884.

"Why askest thou me concerning that which is good? One there is who is good." The Greek and English last given are adopted in the Revised Version of 1881. Now, as those makers of the Textus Receptus built up that text, they were constantly obliged to decide between different readings, like those just given, because the sources before them differed in this manner. The fact is, therefore, that many verses in King James's version of the New Testament read as they do because Greek scholars of the sixteenth century decided, amid conflicting evidence, to set down this form of the text rather than some other. In other words, a great uncertainty hangs over many verses; and their present form is wholly due to the opinion of scholars, who saw fit to include these rather than some other readings.

What we discover in truth is this. Our common English New Testament, while it probably reads in the main about as the original writings when first penned, is not a translation of autograph manuscripts as they came from the hands of Luke and Paul, but the translation of a text built up from various sources in the sixteenth century,—

a text differing in many places from the original, a text for which there is no authority except the fallible judgment of modern scholars.*

THESE ERRORS ILLUSTRATED.

If one wishes to realize how very imperfect the Textus Receptus is and how very uncertain even the best text of the New Testament is in places, all he has to do is to turn to a copy of the Revised Version of 1881, and run his eye over the numerous *marginal notes*, which read, "Many ancient manuscripts read," "Many ancient manuscripts omit this," or "Many ancient authorities have a different text." These facts very forcibly show the imperfections of the text, while they clearly indicate the process by which our text has been constructed. The wording of many verses was adopted as here found because scholars have decided that the reading of a certain manu-

*The formation of our Greek text of the New Testament is ably described by Westcott and Hort, "The New Testament in the Original Greek," 1881, the "Introduction," vol. ii. See, also, Scrivener, "Six Lectures on the Text of the New Testament," 1875. A popular treatment of the same subject may be found in Abbot, "Critical Essays," chaps. x., xi., 1888.

script is better than that of some other which differs from it.

And the great number of changes to be noted in the Revised Version is chiefly due to the fact that our critical apparatus is vastly superior to that used by Erasmus, Beza, and others. Three manuscripts,* the *Sinaitic* and the *Vatican*, belonging to the fourth century, the former discovered in 1859 and the latter only accessible to scholars until recently, and the *Alexandrian*, belonging to the fifth century,—these, our oldest and best authorities, were unknown to the scholars who built up the Textus Receptus.

These ancient manuscripts of the New Testament are very imperfect. All omit verses here and there. There are wide chasms in the Alexandrian, Matthew i.–xxv. and other passages; while in the Vatican the Pastoral Epistles and the Apocalypse are wanting. Many parallel verses have different readings; and yet scholars depend chiefly upon these manuscripts in building

*These manuscripts and their influence upon the text are described by Westcott and Hort in their standard work, to which reference has just been made.

up the New Testament text. And it was the study of the text of these manuscripts which led to nearly all the changes made in the Revised Version, and it is to their different readings that a majority of the marginal notes refer.*

Let us look at a few of them. At the close of the Lord's Prayer, Matthew vi. 13, "*from evil*" is changed into "*from the evil one*"; and "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever," is omitted, because no part of the true text. In Matthew xvi. the whole of verse 3 and a part of verse 4 are marked in the margin as omitted "by some of the most ancient authorities." In 1 Timothy iii. 16 a new text and translation are adopted, which remove the verse from among the proof-texts of Jesus' deity and the dogma of the trinity. These are only a very few of the changes made in the Revised Version, which show the imperfections of both the Textus Receptus and the English translation of 1611, known as King James's Version. By con-

* I presume that the wide-spread neglect of the Revised Version of 1881 by the clergy is largely due to the fact that it makes the uncertainty of the text so very clear,—so clear that it necessarily creates in the common mind a doubt respecting the absolute accuracy of Scripture.

sulting the Revised Version of 1881, we see that some passages of considerable length are marked as spurious, John vii. 53–viii. 11, Mark xvi. 9–20, and 1 John v. 7 being the most important.

That is to say, by comparing the best text of the New Testament that Erasmus and others could construct from the authorities before them with these three oldest manuscripts and other sources of information which we possess, a text is now formed which is unlike Erasmus's text to the extent of several *thousand differences*, many of which, however, are very slight. *Undoubtedly*, if a manuscript a century older than the Sinaitic should be found, still other changes would have to be made.

Upon this general subject the cautious and judicious Dr. Ezra Abbot made these remarks: "It is an unquestionable fact that the Greek text of the New Testament from which our common English version was made contains many hundreds of errors, which have affected the translation, and that in some cases whole verses, or even longer passages, in the common English Bible are spurious. . . . The manuscripts

of the New Testament, *like those of all other ancient writings*, differ from one another in some readings of considerable interest and importance and in a multitude of unimportant particulars. . . . Of the more important various readings, much of the larger part consists of spurious additions to the text, not fraudulent, but originally written as marginal or interlinear notes, and afterwards taken into the text by a very common and natural mistake." * So that any text which we may reconstruct will be in many places a human choice between various readings, and can have no authority higher than the common judgment of fallible men.†

* Abbot, "Critical Essays," pp. 204, 205, 1888. The Italics are mine. By comparing the "Introduction" of Westcott and Hort and the articles by Dean Burgon in the London *Quarterly Review*, October, 1881, January, April, 1882, one can easily see how many textual problems are still open among great scholars.

† Changes in the text of the Bible were mainly brought about in the following manner: (1) By the *carelessness* of copyists in *transcription*, making mistakes in the spelling, the order, and the division of words, by which a part of one word was joined on to another, in their *incorporation* into the text of what had been written down on the margin as notes, and in their *substitution* of words similar in form, but different in meaning. (2) By the honest but mistaken efforts of editors *to correct errors or remove obscurity* by substituting new words or adding explanatory phrases (to which were due many interpolations); to *enrich* the text by the addition of new matter for liturgical and other purposes, so as to expand and emphasize a sentence or paragraph for rhetorical effect. (3) By dogmatists who *intentionally* changed words or added sentences in order to gain support for their theological opinions. For example,

These facts certainly set aside the dogma of *verbal inspiration* as a pure figment of the imagination without any basis in reality. And to appeal to a document so constructed, to use a group of writings whose text is so uncertain in places as an infallible revelation superior to human reason, is most irrational. That is placing a *product* of human reason on the throne of supreme authority *above* the reason that fixed the text in its present form. That there are errors in the text, some of great magnitude, that the text has shared the fortunes of all other texts,— these are the universal conclusions of modern scholarship.* And, as this is the fact, however great and precious some of the truths contained in Scripture may be, divine and authoritative not because there,

1 John v. 7 was deliberately added to secure support for the Trinitarian dogma, while the original "his father" in Luke ii. 33 was put aside for *Joseph* in favor of the theory of Jesus' miraculous birth. The frequency with which the early Christian writers charged one another with *changing the text* is adequate evidence that the mutilation of the text was then not an uncommon practice. See Reuss, "History of the New Testament," Am. Tr., vol. ii. § 362, 1884.

* See Briggs, "Inaugural Address," p. 31, 1891. Professor Iverach, a cautious writer, testifies, "We cannot be said to have a text without error and infallibly true," "Inspiration and Criticism," *The Thinker*, January, p. 17. 1892. Such statements as this, now frequent even among conservatives, do not represent any new discovery; but they do mark the triumph of reason in religion.

but because in harmony with *divine realities*, still the Bible as a *document* must, from the very uncertainties of its text, be treated as a *human document*, to be revered and studied as a noble and serviceable product of the religious spirit, but not used as a final authority.

It may be said that these differences in the ancient manuscripts, these uncertainties in our text, do not involve the great truths upon which Christianity is based. All the manuscripts contain the main facts, and it is of no consequence that such minor defects should exist. This is a reasonable position for any man to take who uses Scripture in a natural and literary manner, not for dogma, but for increase in righteousness. The New Testament text is accurate enough for all practical purposes, *but it is not as accurate as an infallible revelation must be.* It is not accurate enough to be put above human reason or be used as a proof of miracles; and this claim is not a reasonable one for the defender of traditional theology to make. The "entire perfection thereof" assumed by the creed does not exist. If the text is so uncertain, how can I appeal to its words with absolute assurance?

Look at the real situation. We can weed out certain errors and spurious additions in the manuscripts of the seventh century, because they crept in from A.D. 400 to A.D. 650, and we have *fourth century manuscripts* to prove that they crept in; that is, these oldest authorities enable us to set aside textual corruptions made *after their day*. But what about the two centuries back of the Sinaitic and Vatican manuscripts? Undoubtedly, changes were made from A.D. 150 to A.D. 350. Says Reuss, "It may be asserted with tolerable certainty that, the further back we go in the history of the text, the more arbitrarily was it treated." * But how can we detect those changes then made? Corruptions *more recent* than our oldest manuscripts we can discover, but here is a period far beyond even our oldest text.

Dr. Cone states the situation well: "There still lies before him [the critic] the unexplored and unexplorable *terra incognita* which occupies the period extending from the beginning of the second century to the

* Reuss, "History of the New Testament," Am. Tr., vol. ii., p. 370, 1884.

time when the first express witnesses to the text appear."* For this period our only help is found in a few ancient versions, like the Peshito and quotations in the writings of the Church Fathers; but these *sources* help us but little, because both versions and quotations are very imperfect, while they afford about as much evidence against as for the accuracy of our text.

The fact still obtrudes itself. Changes were undoubtedly made in the text from A.D. 150 to A.D. 350. Errors which then crept in exist in our text, but we have no way of detecting or locating them. This degree of uncertainty hovers over our whole New Testament. Just as *our three oldest manuscripts* proved the Textus Receptus corrupt and imperfect in many places, so an older manuscript would certainly reveal errors where we do not suspect them. *They* enable us to set aside 1 John v. 7, the only Trinitarian text in Scripture, as spurious. So a manuscript dating from A.D. 150 might compel us to drop out of Matthew its last three verses. *They* show us that John vii.

*Cone, "Gospel Criticism and Historical Christianity," p. 26, 1891.

53–viii. 11 is also spurious. So a manuscript from the year A.D. 100 might lead us to set aside Matthew i. 18–25; and this would materially change our views of the genealogy of Jesus, provided we still accept that as historical. These are not mere fancies, but legitimate inferences. In the face of such textual uncertainties is it not hazardous to pin our faith to mere texts?

THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE.

II. *Errors in Science.*— Upon this topic little need be said, though it is one that has been very widely discussed. The fact is that the Bible does not claim to be a scientific treatise. The intention of its writers was not scientific instruction, but instruction in righteousness. They only very incidentally and very infrequently referred to scientific topics; and, when they did touch this realm, it was not to disclose mysteries or formulate finalities of human thought, but simply by way of passing allusions or mere illustrations drawn from popular opinions, which they used freely without passing upon them.

If a supernatural revelation, the Bible ought to be perfect in science *as far as it goes*, though only dealing incidentally with scientific subjects. If divine in that sense, it must be held to accuracy in all respects. If directly from God, its scientific allusions ought to be infallible. The excuses made by those who admit its errors in science and yet claim miraculous inspiration for its religious elements are not valid. If a revelation at all, we have a right to insist that whatever it says about science shall be the exact truth.

The plea that the world was not ready for a perfect science, and that therefore God inspired the writers to set down erroneous notions in scientific matters, is too absurd for a moment's consideration. This dishonors God as much as it belittles man. The only rational position to hold is this: If God undertook to give man a special revelation at all, we must suppose that it will be perfect and infallible respecting everything touched. So that from the point of view of tradition it is perfectly legitimate — if a *revelation*, no other view is reasonable — to insist that the Bible, so far as

it deals with science, is absolutely true. Therefore, we have a right to say, *If a revelation*, then it contains no errors in science. But this, I believe, is approaching the Bible from a wrong standpoint; and this view creates needless difficulties, applies to Scripture a test which it does not invite, and so in the end involves the Bible in a discredit which it does not deserve.

When we surrender the claim of supernatural revelation, unwisely made in its behalf, then the obligation of perfection ceases to lie upon the Bible, and its errors in science then bring no discredit upon it and involve its friends in no confusion. If read as a great but human document, expressive of man's religious spirit, no more but no less, then we do not feel obliged to find its scientific notions correct; but we expect imperfections in such matters, and, when seen, they need no excuse or defence, and they do not cheapen the Bible for us.

Nothing in the end is so injurious to the Bible as the claim of infallibility made in its behalf. It raises false expectations, prompts false uses, and applies false standards; and, when these falsities are discov-

ered, the blame is fastened upon the Bible, as though it had made these claims, and had been found false in all these respects, though entirely innocent. This claim of infallibility led men for ages to assert the absolute perfection of the Bible in scientific matters. They staked its worth and authority in all respects upon its scientific accuracy, and they appealed to its texts to decide whether a Newton and a Darwin were right or wrong. Such an attitude invited the most searching criticism. An appeal to the facts of nature proved its errors in science; and, in view of the claim made, scientists very naturally turned from it as a worthless remnant of antiquity, and the impression went out among the people that science had destroyed the Bible. The truth of the matter was that science had simply destroyed claims and uses of the Bible which ought never to have been made.

There is nothing in the Bible itself which warrants the claim that its allusions to scientific problems are infallible. There is nothing in the Bible which warrants its use as an authority in the world of scientific discovery. Men who have used Scripture

texts to club geologists and browbeat biologists have been doing what the Bible does not approve, while their course has brought needless ridicule and discredit upon the Bible. When scientists have found their way impeded by texts, piled there not by the authority of Scripture, but by the fanaticism of superstition, they have attacked the scientific statements of the Bible not from any hatred of religion, but in the defence of their own intellectual liberty. And it is a great pity that dogmatists have put such needless obstacles in the way of scientific progress, while it is a misfortune that they have brought discredit upon the Bible by their irrational claims for it. If left to its own claims, the Bible would never have been arrayed against modern discoveries. If placed upon its true merits, no one would have asserted its scientific infallibility; and, if used in a rational manner, no critic would have been driven to an exposure of its errors in science.

To stop this misuse of the Bible, which now does more harm to Scripture than to science, we need a wider and more popular acquaintance with the results of modern

Biblical scholarship. Canon Cheyne well says, Scientists "have well-nigh demolished the conventional Orthodoxy, I will not say of to-day, but of yesterday, so far as this has to do with the Old Testament; and, but for the infiltration of more critical views into the minds of English Bible-students, the cause of this priceless heirloom of the Church would be virtually lost."* The only way to save the Bible is to abandon the claims for it which are untrue, and to stop those uses of it which are irrational. From what we know to-day of the Bible, we see that it would be very strange if it were absolutely accurate in science. If our conception of Scripture is rational, the existence of scientific errors in it will cause no surprise and occasion no alarm; and, if we ask for the Bible no more than it asks for itself, we will neither use it as a test of what science may teach, nor will we cast it aside as a forgery wrought by superstition, but we will go to it "for instruction in righteousness."

* Cheyne, "The Hallowing of Criticism," p. 187, 1888.

SPECIFIC SCIENTIFIC ERRORS.

If a supernatural revelation, the Bible ought to have no errors in science; but this the Bible does not claim, and this claim is not supported by an appeal to the Bible, for it has errors which cannot be ignored or explained away. And yet the element of scientific error in the Bible is small; and it is small from the very fact that it does not attempt to deal with scientific matters. The Biblical writers do not often fall into erroneous statements about nature, because they do not often allude to nature. Their realm of instruction is human society in its moral aspects and the soul of man in its spiritual aspirations; and, being engaged upon such themes, we would not expect many false teachings in astronomy, geology, or physics. In fact, no attempt at any teaching in these directions is made. The Biblical writings are singularly free from grotesque mythological fancies (but not wholly)* and also from speculations about

*See Gen. vi. 1–4. Many eminent scholars consider the story of Samson, Judges xiii.–xvi., a transformed sun-myth.

the Cosmos, not from supernatural interposition, but on account of the very quality of the Hebrew genius.* It is no more miraculous that the Hebrews refrained from these things than that the Chinese have not built a parthenon.

The Bible does not represent a scientific, but a religious impulse. Science is there only very incidentally, and the number of its positive errors is on this account very small. If its writers had attempted to deal with nature, they would have blundered like all other ancient writers. Where they did touch these subjects, they show no immunity from error. The complete proof that they were granted no special inspiration in the realm of science is found in this one fact. No Biblical writer anticipated in any respect a single modern discovery; while all the Biblical writers shared, so far as we can see, the imperfect science of their own day. In the world of natural science they possessed no knowledge superior to that of their own time. Their ideas of nature were simply those of the

*Renan, "People of Israel," Am. Ed., vol. i. p. 34, 1889.

world in which they lived.* They did not anticipate the Copernican system of astronomy, but believed like all others of their time about earth and sky.† They did not anticipate the discoveries of Lyell and others respecting the formation of the rocks. They had no conception of the true origin of human language, the laws of historic progress, or the real relationship of human races.‡ Nature to them — the earth, the hosts above, the winds, and all the elements — was just what it was to the men of their time; and their writings imply all the errors of science in this respect which then existed.

Still, the astonishing assertion is yet made that the Bible contains no errors in

* Their references to the geography and natural history of the region which they inhabited are reasonably accurate, but this might be expected. The same is true of the Koran and the Homeric poems, yet this does not make them revelations.

† They thought of the firmament and the underworld (Gen. i. 15; Ps. xcviii. 3; 1 Peter iii. 19) the same as ancient people generally. See an article by Andrew D. White, *Popular Science Monthly*, September, 1892, new chapters on the "Warfare of Science."

‡ The views in Genesis xi. respecting the origin of languages are a mere product of the imagination. And, however valuable the ethnological statements in Genesis x., they are no more than reasonably accurate historical records. As Schrader states, the compiler had only a dim conception "of the geographical relation of Babylonia and African Nubia." "Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament," Eng. Tr., vol. i. p. 70, 1885.

science. No errors in science? Is it then true that witchcraft is a reality, that dreams are supernatural visitations, and that diseases are due to demoniacal possession?* All these things are taught in the Bible. Now, either modern science is absolutely erroneous or Scripture contains scientific errors.

The apologist asks, Show me a single error of scientific statement in the Bible. Parading its errors gives as little pleasure as discussing the faults of a friend, but such folly must be rebuked for the sake of the Bible itself. Let any one take the statement respecting the age of the patriarchs to a modern physiologist, and hear his reply. Even conservative scholars have set these statements aside as purely legendary: "It seems more candid and natural to

*Allusions to witchcraft may be found in Ex. xxii. 18; Deut. xviii. 10; 1 Sam. xv. 23; 2 Kings ix. 22; Gal. v. 20; and many other places. Belief that dreams are divine warnings meets us everywhere in the Old Testament and on the threshold of the New Testament. See Matt. ii. 12. So far as we can see, Jesus himself believed in Satan and his activity as the cause of disease. Professor Wendt reaches this conclusion: "He [Jesus] makes it appear as if Satan was the immediate tempter. I am far from thinking that he does so in a mere figurative way. Beyond all doubt Jesus accepted the contemporary ideas as to a real existence of Satan; and accordingly, in the particular cases [of disease] referred to, he supposes a real Satanic co-operation." "The Teaching of Jesus," Eng. Tr., vol. i. p. 164, 1892.

admit that Israelite tradition, like the traditions of other races in dealing with personages living in prehistoric times, assigned to them an abnormally protracted period of life. Hebrew tradition does not in this respect differ from other literature. It preserves the prehistoric tradition. *The study of science precludes the possibility of such figures being literally correct.*" * There is not, so far as I know, a single first-class historian in the world who looks upon those statements as anything but legend. In fact, from beginning to end, the Biblical views of nature are in every respect just the views held by the people among whom the Bible was written; and the modern outgrowth of those views measures the scientific inaccuracy of the Bible.

GENESIS AND GEOLOGY.

A great deal has been written in the last half-century upon the conflict between Genesis and geology. The texts of Genesis were hurled at geologists to drive them from their truth-seeking and discovery, but

* Ryle, "Early Narratives in Genesis," *Expository Times*, p. 354, May, 1892. The Italics are mine. Recently issued as a book.

in time the victory of geology was complete. The facts themselves, in which God resides and presides, could not be explained away. The story of the earth told by them had to be accepted. Then the apologists took another turn, and loudly declared, Genesis and geology are in exact harmony. The revelation of the process of creation made to Moses was a divine anticipation of the discoveries of Lyell and others. And with great ingenuity the substance of these geologic discoveries were read into the brief phrases of those creation stories; and, this done, these apologists sound the trumpet of tradition, and declare that the Bible has been successfully defended from the attacks of infidels. As a matter of fact, no one has ever attacked anything but the false claims made for Scripture by the representatives of dogmatic tradition.

It seems at this date quite needless to refer at length to this matter. Scholars, as a rule, have accepted the conclusion that the accounts of creation in Genesis are to be taken as *poetical* rather than as *scientific*. It is generally admitted, even by those who

may be called conservative, that, so far as these statements in Genesis may be taken in a scientific sense, they are not only in conflict with each other, but with the facts of nature. This controversy respecting Genesis and geology no longer represents a living issue. The modern mind has reached a permanent and a satisfactory conclusion,— that Genesis contains no supernatural anticipation of scientific discoveries, and that its creation stories can only be accepted as cosmic poems, noble in general outline, especially the first, and freighted with certain important religious truths, but valueless for scientific purposes.

The only justification for pausing for a few moments upon this subject, so generally has the above view been accepted, is the fact that such eminent men as Messrs. Gladstone and Dawson have recently written words that confuse the common mind, and give respectability to very erroneous notions on this topic.* These men are simply beat-

*The scientific value of the creation accounts in Genesis was fully discussed by Messrs. Gladstone and Huxley in the *Nineteenth Century*, vol. xix. About the same material may be found in Gladstone, "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture," 1890, and in Huxley, "Some Controverted Questions," 1892. Mr. Gladstone defended the conservative position ably,— far more ably than Dana and Dawson, about the

ing the air, so far as this subject is concerned; and, though eminent in other departments, they cannot reverse the judgment of the world of science and scholarship. Their point of view has been almost universally abandoned by leading scholars and scientists of all shades of religious opinion.

The use of these first chapters of Genesis for purposes of exact science is generally acknowleged to be a mistake. The true position is well stated by Professor Briggs: "The chief error in the use that is ordinarily made of the first chapter of Genesis is a mistake as to the point of view and scope of the representation, together with a neglect of its literary form. . . . He [the writer] does not give us a prose history or a prose treatise of creation, but he presents us with a poem of creation." * Now, when this view is adopted, to bring geology and Genesis into comparison at all is as needless as to compare one of Beethoven's sonatas and a treatise on acoustics. To at-

only geologists who now in any way uphold tradition; and yet when we consider his concessions, and his changes of position, compelled by the keen criticism of Professor Huxley, we see that little is left of the claims once made by dogmatic theologians.

*Briggs, "The Bible, the Church, and the Reason," pp. 284, 285, 1892.

tempt a reconciliation is as absurd as to attempt to reconcile a love poem and an anatomical chart; and to proceed like Messrs. Gladstone and Dawson to make those Biblical words express an anticipation of modern scientific discoveries is to engage in as illegitimate a task and as fruitless as it would be to use Virgil's dream of a golden age as a prophecy of American democracy.

The true view of the real purport and meaning of these chapters of Genesis puts a stop to all such labored and involved apologetics. A very eminent and a very religious writer, the late Professor Elmslie, described this higher ground in these words: "It must be admitted that, *prima facie*, the Bible sequence does not appear to be in unison with the geological. Of attempted reconciliations there is an almost endless variety; but, unfortunately, among the harmonies themselves there is no harmony. At the present moment there is none that has gained general acceptance. A few possess each the allegiance of a handful of partisans. The greater number command the confidence only of their respective

authors, and some not even that. It is needless to discuss these reconciliations, because, if geology is trustworthy in its main results, and if our interpretation of the meaning of Genesis is at all correct, correspondence in order and detail is impossible. If the order in Genesis was meant as science, then geology and Genesis are at issue; but, on the other hand, if the sequence in Genesis was never meant to be physical, the wrong lies with ourselves, who have searched for geology where we should have looked for religion." * These are wise words. And it is an auspicious sign of the times that a constantly increasing number of religious leaders are coming to take the same view.

There are three main reasons why the positions occupied by Messrs. Gladstone and Dawson cannot be maintained. They may be stated very briefly, and all the eloquence and ingenuity of these and other apologists utterly fail to remove these objections to their theories.

(1) Genesis contains *two* accounts of the

* Elmslie, "The First Chapter of Genesis," the *Contemporary Review*, p. 823, December, 1887.

creation, which are not only different, but also absolutely contradictory and irreconcilable.* In the first (mainly in chapter i.) the idea of God is more lofty and abstract than in the second (mainly in chapters ii., iii.). The *spirit* is different. In the first everything is pronounced *good*, but in the second the tempter appears, and the fall occurs; and this difference of *tone* is decisive in other respects. But more important is this fact. The *order* of creation in the first is plants, animals, man, both male and female *simultaneously*. In the second the order is man, vegetation, animals, woman. These and other differences of

* The wide acceptance of the truth of this assertion may be seen from the following quotations. Dr. Marcus Dods, of Edinburgh, who represents conservative scholarship, says: "That the compiler of this book [Genesis] did not aim at scientific accuracy in speaking of physical details is obvious, not merely from the general scope and purpose of the Biblical writers, but especially from this: that in these first two chapters of his book he lays side by side two accounts of man's creation, *which no ingenuity can reconcile*." "The Book of Genesis," p. 2, 1888. The Italics are mine. Dr. Briggs writes: "The doctrine of creation taught in the priestly document of Gen. i. is *altogether different* from that taught in Gen. ii." "The Bible, the Church, and the Reason," p. 146, 1892. And Canon Driver uses similar language: "Differences reveal themselves which preclude the supposition that both sections are the work of the same hand." "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament," p. 7, 1891. Perhaps the most satisfactory *popular* demonstration of these differences was made by President William R. Harper, in the *Hebraica*, October, 1888.

style and thought no sophistry can obscure; and such contradictions, while they do not destroy their religious value as *creation-poems,* do show that we cannot have here any divine anticipation of modern science.

(2) The intimate dependence of these chapters upon similar creation legends which have been discovered upon the cuneiform tablets of ancient Assyrian and Babylonian literature, while not robbing them of a certain pre-eminence, does compel us to surrender the claim that they are absolutely unique and miraculously revealed. The sober judgment of our great scholars is thus expressed by the language of Professor Ryle of the University of Cambridge: "The story of the creation, as illustrated by Assyrian and Babylonian discoveries, is now seen to be the Hebrew version of one of the primitive legends common to the Semitic race."* Now, if these Genesis accounts are the restatement of what was the common property of the Semitic race, it is needless to appeal to them as a revelation, or to

*Ryle, address, "Church Congress," Rhyl, p. 148, 1891. See also Schrader, "Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament," Eng. Tr., vol. i., 1885; Bacon, "Genesis of Genesis," 1892, Appendix I.; Delitzsch, "New Commentary on Genesis," Eng. Tr., vol. i., 1889.

attempt to reconcile them with modern science.

(3) However skilfully the language of Genesis may be twisted and stretched,— and what such great men like Messrs. Gladstone and Dawson will do in this direction is astonishing,— nevertheless, the contradictions between these chapters of Genesis and modern science cannot be explained away. Professor Delitzsch tortured the word "day" until it was glad to save itself by confessing that it *might* mean a long period of time. Few Hebrew scholars now approve the interpretation. It is not the natural meaning of the language. It upsets the reason for the observance of the Sabbath; and, even when admitted as legitimate, the scientific accuracy of Genesis is not by any means vindicated, because these are not the periods described by science. The statement (Gen. i. 16) that the sun, moon, and stars were *made* on the *fourth day* is a most obvious contradiction of the fundamental discoveries of science; and, when Mr. Dawson contends that we may explain away the difficulty by reading *appeared* instead of made, he meets the con-

demnation of every living authority on the Hebrew language. And this does not relieve us of the equally obvious absurdity that *vegetation* existed in the previous period (i. 11–13), before even the sun had *appeared*. How there could be plants *before* there was any sunshine botanists cannot conceive. And yet ministers go on asserting that modern science confirms Genesis in every particular.

The division of creation in Genesis into periods does at first sight seem an anticipation of the teaching of geology respecting the history of our earth; but, when we look closer, the similarity vanishes. In Genesis the creation of plant life *is begun and perfected* on the *third day*, and before any other form of life appeared. So, also, the creation of fowl and fish was *begun and finished* on the fifth day *before* other animals were made. On the other hand, science tells another story. Higher forms of plant life came *after* some early species of water and land creatures, and the creation of "every winged fowl" and "great whales" was not *completed before* the land animals began to appear. Apparent similarities turn

out to be radical differences. As Professor Driver remarks, "By no legitimate method or artifice which I had seen applied to them could these differences be made to vanish or even be shown to be insignificant." *

There are also a few other considerations which need to be kept in mind when discussing the relation of Genesis to modern science. These chapters cannot be a revelation, *because they utterly failed to reveal anything*. They did not tell the story of the earth to any one until scientists, by patient and laborious research, had discovered it; and, when these first discoveries were made, the official interpreters of Genesis used its texts to prove these scientists in error. Not until geology had won its victory in spite of text and clergy, not until science had established its own revelation, did these apologists come forward, and assert that Genesis was a divine anticipation of all these great discoveries. But these men were some thousands of years too late. If a revelation at all given to

* Driver, *The Expositor*, January, 1886. The most satisfactory discussion of the subject that I have ever seen. See also his brief criticism of "Dawson's 'Modern Science in Bible Lands,'" in the *Contemporary Review*, March, 1889.

teach man the true order and method of creation, it ought to have revealed these things to the ancients. What was the good of a revelation that made nothing plain until modern science had discovered it?

And, again, at the best, Genesis teaches no more than what other creation-poems have taught, though in a more sober and sublime fashion,— the creation of the universe by an Almighty God. However great and noble this idea, it was very wide-spread in ancient times. And beside this, not a unique or an original idea, nothing of value is asserted. Upon none of the problems which now engage the attention of scientists, upon none that have occupied science for a century, does Genesis throw any light whatever.

Now is it not perfectly evident that we are here in the region of human fancy, and nothing more? Wherever we find such assertions as these,— that serpents talk, that God walks about in the cool of the evening, that death comes as the result of eating the fruit of the mystical tree, and that flaming angels appear,— these are the sure proof that we are in the realm of myth.

It is most certainly as needless and as thankless a task to argue against the scientific accuracy of these *creation-poems* in Genesis as to refute the Ptolemaic astronomy or demonstrate the non-existence of Shakspere's world of fairies. The modern mind has reached its final conclusion on these matters, and that conclusion rests upon an immovable basis of verifiable facts to be found in the pages of history and the rocks of the earth. For a time the harmony long asserted will still be taught by belated theologians, who know not that a new day has risen, but only for a time. The fact that everywhere these chapters are coming to be called *creation-poems* shows the triumph of science and rational religion.

WHAT HISTORICAL RESEARCH DOES FOR THE BIBLE.

III. *Historical and Other Mistakes.*— The Bible is a collection of ancient historical materials, literary documents which record and reflect the traditions, beliefs, and customs of the ages in which they were written. There are statements of fact which

we would expect the explorer to confirm, because we credit the writers with honest purposes and general accuracy. There are obscure allusions which the historian and archæologist will make clear, while it is perfectly natural to suppose that there are marvels and legends which it would be impossible for any research to prove or verify.

No one to-day disputes the large amount of authentic history in the Bible, so that it is natural that historical investigation should confirm many of its statements and explain many of its obscure texts. This is what archæology does for Herodotus and every other ancient work. But the confirmation of the historical statements of the Book of Kings no more proves the Bible an infallible revelation than does confirmation of Herodotus by Egyptology prove that he was supernaturally inspired. So far as the Biblical writers dealt with the historical affairs before them, we expect to find them making a truthful record, and explorations will confirm such statements; but this confirmation simply proves them honest annalists, not inspired revelators.

What, then, has historical research done

for the Bible? It has made it a new book by shedding new light upon its pages, and by setting its characters and events on the great world stage of human affairs in closer relations with surrounding nations. This broader study of the Bible makes it vastly more interesting, as any reader of such a work as George Adam Smith's "Isaiah" will find; but, while it becomes new and more interesting, the supernatural claims in its behalf are not thereby confirmed.

We must remember that confirming certain allusions in a document neither makes it a revelation nor proves it all true. And, even if all the historical statements of the Bible were confirmed by archæology, this would prove nothing beyond the remarkable accuracy of its writers.

NOT ALL ITS STATEMENTS CONFIRMED.

But has archæology confirmed all the Biblical statements? We sometimes hear and read the positive assertions that no text of the Bible has been contradicted by historical discoveries, but that, on the other hand, its superhuman accuracy has been tri-

umphantly vindicated. But the conclusion of even conservative scholars has been well expressed by an eminent English divine: "Discoveries in the departments of Assyriology and Egyptology have done much to elucidate the meaning of many passages of Holy Writ, but they have sometimes brought to light new difficulties."* This is the precise fact. In digging up the past, both confirmation and contradiction of the Bible have been found. The light of history illuminates nearly all its texts, but to show the error of some as well as the truth of many.

There is probably no better witness at this point than Dr. A. H. Sayce, of the University of Oxford; for he is a man of ample knowledge, who maintains for the Bible all that the facts will warrant. He has very recently said: "But we must not be over-hasty in assuming that, because Oriental archæology has verified the statements of Scripture where we least expected such confirmation to be possible, it has

*Wright, "An Introduction to the Old Testament," p. 7, 1890. See, also, Brown, "Assyriology: Its Use and Abuse in Old Testament Study," 1885.

been equally decisive in vindicating the historical character of everything that is found in the Old Testament. The same evidence which has shown that the campaign of Chedor-laomer and his allies was a reality, and that Melchizedek was a historical figure, has shown also that the so-called *historical* chapters of the Book of Daniel are but examples of Jewish Haggadah [mere romance]. The cuneiform inscriptions of Nabonidus and Cyrus tell us explicitly that there was no siege of Babylon and no capture of the city in the time of Cyrus. The siege described in the Book of Daniel has been transferred from the reign of Darius Hystaspis to that of his earlier predecessor. 'Darius the Mede' is equally unknown to contemporaneous history. Babylon was entered by the Persian Gobryas, the general of the forces of Cyrus; and it was Gobryas, the governor of Kurdistan, who was appointed by Cyrus over the other satraps of the realm. Nabonidus, so far from being the son of Nebuchadnezzar, was an usurper, and the dated contract-tablets make it certain that Belshazzar, the eldest son of Nabonidus, never became

king."* This is a fair statement of the situation. Assyrian and Babylonian discoveries help to make the Bible a new book, but they do not help to make it a revelation. They confirm many of its texts, and make plain some of its dark passages; but they prove the presence of error in the Scriptures.

For instance, it is impossible to reconcile the Assyrian and the Biblical chronology, between which there are differences varying from ten to fifty years.† Professor Schrader, of Berlin, a very eminent but also a very conservative scholar, has worked these matters out in a standard work, "Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament," where he writes: "There gapes here [in reference to 2 Kings xv.] a chronological discrepancy which refuses to be explained away. If Assyrian chronology, certified, as we have said, fivefold, be the correct one, the Biblical cannot be cor-

* Sayce, "Biblical Archæology," the *Expository Times*, p. 118, December, 1891.

† A conservative English clergyman, Rev. J. J. Lias, has recently written: "The chronology is very often seriously at fault. . . . The chronology of Judges is clearly not to be regarded as strictly accurate." "What Mistakes are there in the Bible?" *The Thinker*, p. 331, April, 1892.

rect."* In another passage he makes the farther general statement that, while the cuneiform inscriptions in many respects disprove the Bible, yet in general they support the Biblical record: "Though the chronological system of the Books of Kings, as compared with that of the monuments, is shown to be untenable, yet in other respects the Bible receives from the latter, even in the matter of chronology, satisfactory corroboration."† It is needless to enter farther into details, for these few cases illustrate the general situation.

In the New Testament there is little scope for investigations of this character, because definite historical statements are few, and material for testing their accuracy is scarce. We assume that these New Testament writers intended to tell the truth; if they made mistakes, that would be human. The fact that they did make mistakes proves that they were not superhuman. The most notable error *in history* in this body of Scripture is probably the statement in Luke ii. 2, that a decree of Augustus to tax the

*Schrader, "Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament," Eng. Tr., vol. i. p. 213, 1885.

†*Idem.*, vol. ii. p. 173.

whole world "was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria." But Mommsen, our greatest authority, declares this statement erroneous. And recently Professor Emil Schürer, after a thorough investigation, reaches the same conclusion.* Therefore, the reasonable opinion seems to be: the Bible is as accurate as we have any reason to expect, if the writers are to be regarded simply as honest annalists, but not accurate enough for an infallible and supernatural revelation.

CONFUSION RESPECTING THE REAL PROBLEM.

The problem here presented does not seem to be well understood by apologetic writers, for they appear to think that the confirmation of certain very obvious historical statements in the Bible also carries with it the confirmation of whatever miraculous and legendary elements may be included in the same document. They fail to see that proving the truth of some statements in a

* Schürer, "The Jewish People," Division I., vol. ii. pp. 105, 143. The description of the manner of collecting the tax is contrary to all that we know of Roman habits, and also to historic probability.

writing is not enough to authenticate its obviously legendary features.

For example, the cuneiform inscriptions prove that there was a king, Nebuchadnezzar, as the Book of Daniel asserts; but they do not prove that he was turned out to pasture, and ate grass like an ox, as the prophecy asserts, and this is what rationalists have set aside as a fiction. And setting aside such legendary elements, while destroying the traditional claim made for the Bible, does not destroy the spirituality of Isaiah nor discredit the piety of the Psalter.

The stone tablets cry out that the Persians captured Babylon, but they do not confirm the statement in Daniel respecting the handwriting on the wall at Belshazzar's feast; and the miracle is just what rationalists have doubted. Nothing has been done to remove these reasonable doubts. Historical research sustains the statement in Daniel that Persia was conquered by Greece; but the stones of the oven in which the Hebrew children are said to have been placed without having the smell of fire on their garments,—these have not yet cried out to confirm the marvellous tale. But

this is just what must be proved to make us believe in the infallibility of the Bible.

Again, suppose a tablet should be discovered on which it is stated that Joshua in the year 1281 B.C. defeated the Amorites at Gibeon.* What would this prove? Simply that the Biblical writer was so far an accurate historian. It would not prove that our Heavenly Father stopped the sun and moon to aid Joshua in the slaughter of his own creatures. But the partnership of God in a horrible massacre by a tremendous miracle is what the Bible asserts. This is what we deny, and this is what must be confirmed to make that book infallible; but this is just what archæology has not done. And, even if stated on that tablet yet to be found, that the sun and moon did stand still, we would not believe it. For we find Assyrian tablets on which Assyrian kings boast of a similar help received from their God in war; and yet, though these are contemporaneous documents, we do not for a moment believe the assertion. And, surely, a tablet, if found in the valley of the Jordan,

* Joshua x. 6–27.

ought to be treated the same as one dug up near the banks of the Euphrates.

Still again, suppose that an inscription should be found near Mount Sinai, giving the general fact of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. Would that prove the statement true that Jehovah sent a murrain to destroy the cattle of Egypt (Ex. ix. 6), while in a few days he sent a hail-storm to kill the very cattle (Ex. ix. 25) that had already been destroyed by murrain? This is an absurdity that ought not to be found in an infallible revelation, though it makes Amos and Isaiah no less interesting and inspiring.

Thirty years ago Bishop Colenso analyzed these accounts of the exodus and the sojourn of Israel in the Sinaitic peninsula with great acumen. He showed in a very forcible manner that one of the two series of ancient accounts interwoven in our Book of Exodus, that of the *Priest Code*, is purely fictitious.* These things could not have happened. An army of 600,000 men could not have been been marshalled in one night;

* Colenso, "Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined," Part I., 1863. Also, Colenso, "Lectures on the Pentateuch and the Moabite Stone," Lecture XX., 1876.

3,000,000 people with flocks and herds could not have lived for forty years upon so small a territory, nor could such numbers have been supplied by water from one well.* Think of one well as an adequate water-supply for New York! Though Bishop Colenso was bitterly denounced and persecuted for this work a generation ago, his presentation of the case was so very strong that it has carried conviction to the world of modern scholarship.† He made it so plain that these are legends that his general conclusions are assumed as true even by conservative critics. The recent indorsement by Rev. B. W. Bacon in his admirable work, "Genesis of Genesis," is very significant.‡ And, if a tablet of unquestioned authenticity and integrity should be found with the Ten Commandments, signed by Moses himself, this discovery would be no answer to the arguments of Bishop Colenso.

*Ex. xvii. 6. See Colenso, "Lectures on the Pentateuch and the Moabite Stone," Lecture XVI., 1876.

† Of Colenso, Kuenen remarked, "Colenso demonstrated the absolutely unhistorical character of sundry narratives in the Pentateuch by applying the test of those universal laws of time and space from which no chain of phenomena can escape." "The Hexateuch," Eng. Tr., p. xvi., 1886.

‡ Bacon, "Genesis of Genesis," p. 45, 1892.

Those accounts would still be incredible. We should still set them aside as legends.

Some twenty-five years ago a valuable discovery was made of what is called the Moabite Stone,—a stone with an inscription which Mesha, king of Moab, caused to be placed upon it about nine centuries before Christ. This inscription confirms the Biblical statement that Omri was king of Israel in that distant time. But this no one ever doubted. What rationalists have denied is the statement that Elijah about that period miraculously called down fire from heaven. And this the Moabite Stone does not confirm.* In fact, the account which it gives of certain events is quite unlike that contained in 2 Kings i.–iv.

We often hear it said that the very stones have cried out against the infidels in behalf of the Bible. But those who make this assertion little understand the true state of the case. Historical statements research has confirmed; obscure texts archæology has made plain; but miracles and absurdities have not been in any way confirmed or

*Colenso, "Lectures on the Pentateuch and the Moabite Stone," Lecture XXV., 1876.

made more reasonable, and these are what rationalists have denied. The stones have not cried out that God really commanded Moses to slay three thousand of his own people for worshipping a golden calf, when Moses himself worshipped the brazen serpent;* nor have they cried out that God did in truth command witches to be killed;† nor have they cried out that God did really himself strike down in death fifty thousand inhabitants of Bethshemesh because they looked upon the ark.‡ These are statements which rationalists contend cannot be true. The presence of such statements disproves the traditional view of the Bible; and these archæology has done nothing to make credible.§

* Ex. xxx. 28. † Ex. xxii. 18. ‡ 1 Sam. vi. 19.

§ It was at one time expected that great things would be accomplished for the traditional view of Scripture by explorations in Egypt. But the results have been very small. Little has been found in Egypt to make the history of Israel plainer, and nothing whatever to confirm any of the legendary and miraculous statements in the Bible, which are the only ones that are questioned and that need support. There are very few traces of Egyptian influence in the faith or institutions of Israel,—"far fewer than often stated," is the language of Professor Robertson Smith, in "The Prophets of Israel," p. 379. The Bible contains only a small number of references to Egypt, and none except what a well-informed Hebrew writer might easily have made at a comparatively late date. In view of the claims made and the small results really effected, the words of Professor Wellhausen, in reference to "the God-forsaken dreariness of certain modern Egyptologists," seem exceedingly appro-

LEGENDS IN THE BIBLE.

There are, then, legends in the Bible. And it is not strange that there are. It would be very strange if there were none. A legend, moreover, is not a product of evil intent or Satanic influence. It is the creation of man's imagination, often impelled by a noble veneration for a great personage, and often directed toward high moral ends; a mere poetic embellishment of prosaic facts in order to emphasize and illustrate a great truth, a raiment of fancy which every one is supposed to understand,— sometimes the product of national or partisan pride in its effort to magnify itself, and even sometimes a deliberate reinterpretation of his-

priate. "History of Israel," p. 440. This whole subject is ably treated by Professor Robertson Smith in an article, "The Date of the Pentateuch," in the *Contemporary Review*, October, 1887. These words from Canon Driver are as admirable as they are significant: "It is an error to suppose, as seems sometimes to be done, that topographical explorations, or the testimony of inscriptions, supplies a refutation of critical conclusions respecting the Old Testament. . . . Mr. Girdlestone, in 'The Foundations of the Bible' (1890), partly from an inexact knowledge of the facts, partly through misapprehension of what critics really hold, employs himself largely in beating the air." "Introduction," p. xiii., note. Just about the same language might very justly be applied to Mr. Gladstone's book, "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture." While full of eloquent passages and some very noble sentences, it does not come near the vital points at issue.

tory. As we find such legends in all other ancient collections similar to the Bible, it is natural for us to expect to find them in Scripture. What we know respecting its manner of composition confirms this expectation. They are indeed there; and historical discoveries have not made them look less, but more legendary.

When we read the stories of the patriarchs in Genesis, it is evident that we are in the realm of legends,— legends, however, which have great interest and a certain historic value. When we read in Exodus the accounts of Moses' communion with Jehovah, it is plain that we are dealing with religious romance. None of these things were apparently known to the prophets of the eighth century B.C.,* and the work in which we read them, the *Priest Code*, was composed as late as the fifth century B.C.; and such legends would be inevitable under the circumstances at that late date.† When we read in Numbers (xxxi.) the story of the slaughter of the Midianites, where we are told that *twelve*

* From Amos to Isaiah. See Kuenen, "Religion of Israel," Eng. Tr., vol. i. chap. v., 1875.

† Bacon, "Genesis of Genesis," p. 44, 1892.

thousand Israelites killed nearly two hundred thousand people, including many thousands of women and children, and this to please Jehovah, we say with Colenso, "Happily, this frightful butchery, exceeding infinitely in atrocity the tragedy at Cawnpore, has been carried out only on paper." * When we read the story of Elijah and his ascension,† of Hezekiah and the going backward of the shadow on the dial,‡ and of the angel's slaying in one night one hundred and eighty-five thousand soldiers in the Assyrian army,§ — when we read these things, we put them aside as legends. We would do this if we were reading in any other book. Reason and conscience demand that we must do the same with these statements in the Bible.

The attitude of modern scholars is well illustrated by these words from Professor Toy: "Legendary material there is in abundance in the earlier histories [of the Bible]; but it is a natural growth which has incorporated itself organically into the real history, while a large part of the embellish-

* Colenso, "Lectures on the Pentateuch and the Moabite Stone," p. 217, 1876.

† 2 Kings ii. 11. ‡ 2 Kings xx. 11. § 2 Kings xix. 35.

ment of Chronicles * has the air of an artificial addition. It may be to some extent a real traditional coloring, but seems in many cases to be due to the imagination of the writer, who could conceive of the past only under the form of the present, and writes the story accordingly. The result, at any rate, is thorough-going ritual reconstruction, a new, nicely rounded history in which the well-known characters of the books of Samuel and Kings play rôles foreign to the prophetic conception. The chronicler gained his end: his work is a literary success; but it is a religious *romance* rather than *a sober history*." † There is probably not a single Biblical professor in a German university who would question this statement, so universally is this conclusion there held; and even in America and Great Britain, periodicals that pride themselves upon their orthodoxy have referred to this work in terms of highest praise: indeed, a remarkable fact, full of hope and promise.

But there are many who readily admit the

* This is very fully illustrated by Wellhausen, History of Israel, Eng. Tr., chap. vi., 1885.

† Toy, "Judaism and Christianity," p. 55, 1890. The Italics are mine.

presence of legend in the Old, who will not make the same admission respecting the New Testament. And yet this must be done with equal frankness, and it is coming to be done. When we read the birth-stories that cluster about the name of Jesus in Matthew and Luke; * when we read in Mark of the dove that alighted on Jesus at his baptism,† and in John of the recall of Lazarus to life;‡ when we read in Acts of the cloven tongues and of the death of Ananias and Sapphira,§ — then we say that these are legends, the tributes of reverent fancy, the poetic embellishments of mere prosaic incidents.‖ It is a significant circumstance that we should find so conservative a man as Meyer setting aside many of these things as legendary, using this language about many of the incidents reported in connection with the resurrection: they "must be referred to the category of unhistorical legend." ¶

* Matt. ii.; Luke i., ii.
† Mark i. 10.
‡ John xi.
§ Acts ii. 3, v. 7–11.
‖ See Carpenter, "The First Three Gospels," chap. v., 1890.
¶ Meyer, Commentary on Matthew, Am. Tr., p. 516, 1884.

CONTRADICTIONS IN SCRIPTURE.

And, as there are legends in the Bible, so we find, as already pointed out, that there are contradictions in Scripture. Reference to some of these will be found in another part of this work.* The differences in the Genesis accounts of creation have just been described. There is also a continuous line of differences, often amounting to contradiction, between the two stories of the flood which are interwoven in Genesis vi.–ix. That respecting its length is decided. As Professor Ryle remarks: "The most serious discrepancy of all relates to the duration of the flood. In the *Jehovist* narrative the whole period occupied by the warning before the flood, its prevalence, and its subsidence, comprised but sixty-eight days. In the priestly narrative [*Priest Code*], on the other hand, the duration of the whole flood catastrophe exceeded a year." †

* See Appendix.

† Ryle, "Early Narratives in Genesis," the *Expository Times*, p. 358, May, 1892. Now printed in a book with this title. See, also, "The Pentateuchal Problem," *Hebraica*, October, 1888.

Similar contradictions exist in the stories of the exodus.*

We have alluded to the many differences between the Book of Kings and the Book of Chronicles. A similar line of differences separates Samuel and Chronicles. In many respects these documents tell an entirely different story of the same events. In noting some of them, as illustrated in the accounts given by Kings and Chronicles of David, Canon Driver remarks, "In these and similar representations there is certainly much [in Chronicles] that cannot be strictly historical." † A very evident contradiction of 1 Kings xv. 14 — "But the high places were not taken away" — is found in 2 Chronicles xiv. 3, — "For he took away the strange altars and the high places." Both passages refer to Asa and to the same circumstance in his life.

After making a careful examination of 2 Kings xi. 4–16 and 2 Chronicles xxiii. 7–15, Professor Henry P. Smith, an eminent scholar in the Presbyterian Church,

* See Colenso, "Lectures on the Pentateuch and the Moabite Stone," Lecture XX., 1876.

† Driver, "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament," p. 501, 1891.

frankly uses this language: "It is perfectly clear that there is a discrepancy in these two accounts." * A long catalogue of similar contradictions might be made.† An extended and exhaustive treatment of this subject has been made by Dr. Wellhausen, one of our greatest scholars.‡

And the New Testament is not free from such differences and contradictions. Attention has been called already to some of those which exist in the Gospels. The most important are the differences in the several accounts of the resurrection and the contradiction of the first three Gospels respecting the time of the crucifixion by the statement of the Fourth.§ A difference of considerable interest exists between Matthew and Luke in their accounts of Jesus' residence at Nazareth. In Matthew ii. 23

* Evans and Smith, "Biblical Scholarship and Inspiration," p. 107, 1891.

† Compare 1 Kings iv. 26 and 2 Chron. ix. 25; 1 Kings ix. 11 and 2 Chron. viii. 2; 2 Kings xii. 4–6 and 2 Chron. xxiv. 4–14; 2 Kings viii. 25–26 and 2 Chron. xxi. 20–xxii. 2. Also, 2 Sam. xiii. 8 and 1 Chron. xi. 11; 2 Sam. viii. 4 and 1 Chron. xviii. 3; 2 Sam. x. 18 and 1 Chron. xix. 18; 2 Sam. xxiv. 24 and 1 Chron. xxi. 25.

‡ Wellhausen, History of Israel, Eng. Tr., chap. vi., 1885. If one wishes to see how trivial and inconsequential criticism can become, he will do well to glance at an attack on Wellhausen in the *Edinburgh Review*, July, 1892.

§ See Appendix.

it is expressly stated that the holy family took up their abode in Nazareth, for the first time, we must infer, *after* the return from Egypt, *in order that a certain prophecy might be fulfilled.* According to Luke ii. 39 the family returned from Jerusalem immediately after the birth of Jesus *to their own city, Nazareth*, where, according to Luke i. 26, Joseph and Mary had been living. We are dealing here with contradictions which inevitably creep into narratives touched by legend.*

One of the most important historical difficulties of the New Testament is that which is found in the divergent accounts of the Apostolic Council, as given on the one hand in Acts xv. 6–29 and on the other by Paul in Gal. ii. 1–10. (1) In Acts this is described as an authoritative church assemblage; but Paul writes of it as a private consultation,—"privately to them which were of reputation." (2) In Acts it is a peaceful meeting where Peter and James meet Paul and Barnabas on friendly terms; but, in recalling his experience, Paul is evidently disturbed by unpleasant memories;

* Compare, also, Matt. xiii. 39, 40, and Luke xi. 29, 30.

for he writes, "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour"; and with ill-concealed sarcasm, which points back to something far different from the complacent conference described in Acts, he says, "*James, Cephas, and John who seemed to be pillars.*" * (3) In Acts Peter appears as the original apostle of the Gentiles, and James talks like the most catholic-minded Christian of his time; but Paul states the outcome of his mission to be simply this: he won the Jerusalem apostles to an acknowledgment of his ministry, but their ways were still to be separate,—contrary to the spirit of the speeches attributed to Peter and James in Acts,—"The gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter." There are here differences which cannot be explained away. Apologists formerly contended that these accounts refer to different occasions, but this cannot be admitted. Undoubtedly, Acts contains a less accurate description of the same event.

*The Book of Acts, being a compilation from various documents, is not wholly consistent; for in ix. 7 it states that those who were with Paul at his conversion *heard a voice*, but saw no one, while in xxii. 9 it reads that these same persons saw the light, but *heard no voice!*

The position taken by Zeller some years ago has in the main been maintained: "If we compare its [Galatians'] representation with that of Acts, such irreconcilable contradictions appear between the two that we cannot consider the latter to be historically true in its essential features." * These are, indeed, decisive imperfections, not unnatural or unusual in historical documents; but they very forcibly show that we are dealing here with a human production rather than an infallible revelation.

MISTAKES OF NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS IN USING THE OLD.

The quotations taken from the Old Testament by the writers of the New very forcibly show the fallibility of the Scriptures. Professor L. J. Evans, a prominent Presbyterian scholar whom I have already quoted, states the case fairly: "In making the citation, the New Testament writer sometimes quotes the Septuagint *verbatim*. Sometimes he changes a word or two. Some-

* Zeller, "Acts of the Apostles," Eng. Tr., vol. ii. p. 16, 1876. See, also, Reuss, "The Apostolic Age," Eng. Tr., vol. i. p. 263, 1872; and Pfleiderer, "Paulinism," Eng. Tr., vol. ii. p. 228, 1877.

times the change brings the passage into closer conformity to the original Hebrew. Sometimes the change introduces a variation both from the Hebrew and the Septuagint. Sometimes the writer gives a new translation of the Hebrew, apparently his own. I appeal to every candid student of these facts whether they comport with the notion of a rigorous verbal infallibility. To my mind they are quite conclusive to the contrary." * It is evident that the apostles, both in quoting and in interpreting the Old Testament, used it according to the imperfect methods of their day.

Indeed, their freedom in the use of the text, to which Professor Evans alludes, proves two things: (1) That they were not under any slavish bondage to the letter of Scripture, and (2) that there were different texts, or various readings, in existence in their age. But the New Testament writers show their imperfection more especially in their misuse of passages from the Old Testament. They intended no deception; but, by using an allegorical method of interpretation, they

* Evans and Smith, "Biblical Scholarship and Inspiration," p. 44, 1891.

made texts from the prophets yield meanings which no rational criticism can allow. In this way, guided by a false method and impelled by an erroneous Messianic fancy, they committed many grave mistakes. And there is no more overwhelming proof that they were not guided by any supernatural inspiration than their misuse of the Old Testament texts. These obvious mistakes meet us everywhere in the New Testament.

In Matthew i. 23 appeal is made to the passage in Isaiah (vii. 14) respecting the child Immanuel as a prediction of Jesus. Popular preachers of the present repeat this blunder; but the evidence is complete that the text ought not to be so used.* (1) Isaiah applied this language to a child about to be born; and he had reference to an immediate historical event,—the conquest of Damascus, which occurred 732 B.C. (2) The child about to be born, to which Isaiah alludes in a symbolic manner, in order to teach a great lesson there and then, was not represented as the Messiah. (3) The Jews never considered this passage Messianic.

*See Mitchell, "Prophecies concerning Immanuel," *Andover Review*, April, 1891.

(4) The name Immanuel is nowhere else found in the New Testament; and Jesus was never during his life called by it, as here implied. The writer simply made a mistake; and, as now admitted by great scholars, Isaiah's words cannot with any show of reason be considered a prediction of Jesus.* In Matthew ii. 23 we read, "And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, He shall be called a Nazarene." As no such passage is found in the Old Testament, we must conclude (1) that he quoted from some apocryphal work, now lost; (2) that he misunderstood and misapplied Judges xiii. 5–7, for here a person is made a *Nazarite*,— not *Nazarene*,— not by *residence* in Nazareth, but by a peculiar vow; or (3) that he freely combined various Old Testament references to the Messiah. *But in any case* he gave a very erroneous reason for Jesus' residence in Nazareth.

In Matthew xxi. 5 a passage is freely quoted from Zechariah ix. 9: "Say ye to

*The uses to which Old Testament texts are put, for example, in Matt. ii. 15, Luke i. 17, John vii. 38, have no justification whatever in the context of the writings from which these quotations are made.

the daughters of Zion, Behold thy King comes to thee, meek, and riding on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass." * This is used as a prophecy of Jesus' triumphal entrance into Jerusalem. But there are here two very large mistakes. (1) The writer in Zechariah uses the language to describe an expected Jewish king, who would at that time subdue the Greeks, who are specifically mentioned. The prophet, however, was mistaken; for Israel became the servant of the Greeks. Therefore, the language had no Messianic meaning, and it could have no reference to Jesus. (2) The writer of the Gospel, ignorant of the *parallelisms* of the Hebrew, supposed that two animals were here described, while the last clause is only meant as another description of the same animal. So that the writer not only misapplied this passage, but he also misunderstood it.

*Our Massoretic text reads: "Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion, shout, daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, thy King comes to thee; just and saved is he, meek and riding on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass." As the Septuagint is somewhat different, the writer of the Gospel probably used a text different from both these, probably an Aramaic version. These differences illustrate that line of facts to which Professor Evans refers in the passage just quoted from him, and they prove the uncertainties of the text.

One of the most glaring mistakes of this class is found near the close of Matthew. Let me put the two passages side by side:

"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me." — MATT. xxvii. 9, 10.

"And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord." — ZECH. xi. 12, 13.

The evangelist here attributes to Jeremiah what evidently was taken from Zechariah, for no similar passage is found in the former. And some have supposed that this mistake is the only one here made; and, very curiously, even learned commentators pass over the matter, as though the only difficulty here is this slight clerical error. But this is a very small part of the real difficulty. As Dr. Toy remarks, "The external resemblance between the two events consists merely in the terms 'thirty pieces of silver' and 'potter.'" * Let us briefly note the

* Toy, "Quotations in the New Testament," p. 72, 1884. The use of the Old Testament by the writers of the New is also ably discussed by Kuenen, "The Prophets and Prophecy in Israel," Eng. Tr., chap. xiii., 1877.

chief differences. (1) In Zechariah it is the *author himself* who asks to be paid his price. In Matthew the money is the sum paid *to Judas for his treachery*. Both the persons and the use of the money are different. (2) In Zechariah the money is cast *to the potter* in the house of the Lord. In Matthew *it is paid back by Judas to the chief priests*. (3) In Zechariah nothing is said of the farther disposition of this money. In Matthew it is used to buy the potter's field, "to bury strangers in," of which there is no mention in the prophecy. Now, it is not very remarkable that the writer of the Gospel, under the influence of an erroneous belief respecting the fulfilment of prophecy, should fall into the misuse of the prophet's language; but, certainly, no infallibility could have been possessed by him.*

In Acts ii. 25–28 a Messianic application is given to Psalm xvi. 8–13; but, as Dr. Toy remarks, "Of a Messianic reference there does not seem to be any trace in the Psalm itself." † Paul, in becoming a Christian, continued to argue and quote

* See Cone, "Gospel Criticism and Historical Christianity," chap. x., 1891.

† Toy, "Quotations in the New Testament," p. 101, 1884.

Scripture very much like the rabbis of his time. In Romans ix. 33 he uses Isaiah xxviii. 16 to describe Jesus, contrary to every sound principle of interpretation. In Romans xi. 25, 26, he misapplies Isaiah lix. 20, 21, xxvii. 9, in a similar fashion; while in Galatians iii. 13 he uses Deuteronomy xxi. 23, with reference to Jesus, without any warrant whatever.* His whole argument is here, as in some other places, fanciful to the verge of absurdity. Paul's spiritual intuitions were very clear, his moral enthusiasm tremendous; but in argument and interpretation he repeated the errors of his school.

In the first chapter of Hebrews there are five quotations from five different Psalms, and every text is turned from its true meaning and misused. In writing of these Professor Reuss used this language: "Not one

* Paul represents Jesus' resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 4) as occurring on the third day "according to the Scriptures," evidently having in mind Psalm xvi. 10, which reads, "Neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." This is an evident misapplication of the language of the Psalm, for the words really express the personal conviction of the writer (see the preceding and following verses). The Psalm is in no sense Messianic, as admitted by so conservative a scholar as Riehm; and Briggs correctly states ("Messianic Prophecy," p. 151) that "there is no thought of resurrection" in the Psalm. Paul's use of the text is wholly without warrant.

of which has escaped the criticism of later exegetes, as having another meaning in the original text." *

And even Jesus' use of Scripture, as reported to us by the evangelists, cannot be considered absolutely faultless. I do not refer to his use of the Pentateuch as the work of Moses or to Psalm cx. as written by David; for these matters I have discussed elsewhere.† There are, however, some facts of a different character which seem difficult to reconcile with the theory of absolute and perfect knowledge. To refer to but one instance: the evangelist reports Jesus as applying Isaiah xlii. 7–4 to himself.‡ But, as already pointed out,§ the language of the later Isaiah, in which the passage is found, must be understood as meaning, not an individual, but the people Israel. The judgment of Professor Wendt, by no means a radical, represents the conclusion of modern scholarship. In discussing this part of Isaiah, he writes: This language "cannot be interpreted as referring

* Reuss, "The Apostolic Age," Eng. Tr., vol. i. p. 353, 1872.
† See Chap. II.
‡ Matt. xii. 18–21.
§ See the Introduction.

to one particular future king."* If so, then Jesus, if correctly reported, diverted this language from its original meaning by the use which he made of it. This fact argues no moral blemish, but intellectual limitation.

The author of the Fourth Gospel (John v. 46) represents Jesus as asserting that Moses wrote of him; and yet there is really nothing in the Pentateuch (even if Mosaic) which can be considered a prediction of Jesus. Probably he never used this language. But, whichever alternative we take, we have here an error.

Professor Toy has discussed these questions in a most admirable manner, combining both the spirit of reverence and the method of science; and on this particular point he remarks: "To assume his [Jesus'] interpretation of the Old Testament to be final authority is to assume that which can be proved only by investigation. The Bible itself nowhere teaches that a holy man, sent with a message from God, or a son of God, the embodiment of the divine, would be lifted above the ordinary conditions of

* Wendt, "The Teaching of Jesus," Eng. Tr., vol. i. p. 61, 1892.

human life." * It is very evident that Jesus in his use of Scripture, even taking the reports as they stand, towered far above his disciples and the rabbis of his day. For it was the bold and radical Kuenen who wrote: "As little as he was equalled in the domain of religion, even by his most eminent disciples, so little can we deem it probable that one of them should have stood on a level with him in depth of understanding the Scripture. . . . The manner in which Jesus uses Scripture stands in the same relation to that of his followers as his religious genius stands to theirs." † And yet, what we have seen in Jesus' usage is not *perfection*, but *superiority*, if we may trust the reports given in the Gospels.

The conclusion respecting the whole matter to which we are led by a study of all the facts is this: The writers of the New Testament fell into errors in their use of the Old Testament. No superhuman wisdom guided them.

* Toy, "Quotations in the New Testament," p. xxviii., 1884.

† Kuenen, "Prophets and Prophecy in Israel," Eng. Tr., p. 548, 1877.

NO UNITY IN THE BIBLE.

It is often asserted by those who ought to know better that the teaching of the Bible represents a sublime unity. All its ideas of Deity, duty, and destiny, are perfectly harmonious. And that teachings on these great subjects, distributed through some threescore of writings composed during a period of over a thousand years, should be in harmony,—this is used as an absolute proof that the Bible is a divine revelation. This is the claim.* And if true, if it were a fact that all these writings are in exact accord upon such great themes, then something more than human nature would be needed to account for our Bible. But nothing could be farther from the truth than this claim. All the facts, as any one can easily see for himself, point just the other way. It is not creditable to any one's intelligence to repeat this absolutely false assertion.

Look at a few facts, out of the hundreds that might be presented. Compare the Golden Rule (Matt. vii. 12) with Jehovah's

*See Rogers, "Superhuman Origin of the Bible," p. 5 *et seq.*, 1874.

command in Exodus iii. 22 respecting the deceit to be practiced by the Israelites in borrowing from the Egyptians; with the awful butchery of the Midianites as described in Numbers xxxi.; and with many similar narratives in the Old Testament. How can any man of common sense and honesty of mind look these facts in the face, and say that the teachings of the Bible are harmonious? The moral sentiment in the one case is infinitely superior to that displayed by the others. What unity is there between the dreary platitudes and merely prudential spirit of Ecclesiastes, on the one hand, and the sublime lessons pictured in Jesus' parables? Let any sensible person read first the one and then the other, and say, if he can, that all parts of the Bible are in perfect harmony. What greater contrast could be found than that between Esther — which, as Canon Driver practically admits, breathes "a spirit of vengeance and hatred, without any redeeming feature" * — and the Sermon on the Mount?

Yes, a greater contrast can be found; and it is in the Bible. Look at these sentences:

* Driver, "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament," p. 456, 1891.

"Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents. . . . Add iniquity unto their iniquity; and let them not come into thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living. . . . Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg; let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the stranger spoil his labor. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children."* Then read Paul's immortal description of *charity* (1 Cor. xiii). Could any greater contrast be found in the whole realm of human literature?

Are these threescore writers in perfect harmony? Put these sentences side by side: "Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood" (Jer. xlviii. 10); "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. v. 9). These commands cannot be harmonized.

* Psalm lxix. 24, 25, 27, 28; Psalm cix. 8–12.

Indeed, instead of *unity* from beginning to end, we find that the writers of the Bible are often bold enough to set aside and abolish the teachings of their predecessors. In Exodus xx. 5 we read, "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." But Ezekiel, with a good deal of emphasis, set this teaching aside: "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father" (xviii. 20). In many parts of the Pentateuch, especially Leviticus i.–x., the most minute directions are given respecting sacrifices, which are represented as absolutely necessary and well-pleasing to Jehovah; but in Isaiah we read, "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol." * In Exodus xxi. 24 the command is given, "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, . . . foot for foot." But Jesus felt perfectly free to set this aside; for, after alluding to it, he said, "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but who-

* Isa. lxvi. 3..

soever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." * These passages are certainly not in harmony.

In Deuteronomy, at the close of a code of laws which includes regulations respecting sacrifices, these maledictions are pronounced upon those who in any way neglect any of these regulations: "Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out." † But Paul was bold enough to put aside the whole Mosaic Law, so far as it related to sacrifices and Levitical rites. Although the author of Deuteronomy pronounced these bitter curses upon those who should neglect these things, the apostle Paul, with much force, and even vehemence, argued against them as then useless, — nay, more than that: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law." ‡

* Matt. v. 39. † Deut. xxviii. 16–19.
‡ Gal. v. 4.

The very system enforced as absolutely divine in the Pentateuch this great advocate of liberty set aside as no longer operative or useful. Hardly any two pieces of literature could be found with more radical differences than the Book of Leviticus and Paul's letter to the Romans.

All the teachings of the Bible respecting God in harmony? What could be farther apart than the blood-thirsty Jehovah of Judges and Jesus' Heavenly Father of infinite love? All the teachings of the Bible about the future life a perfect unit? What could be more unlike than the silence of the Hebrew prophets and the despair of Ecclesiastes on the one hand and on the other the vivid hope of the Gospels and the glorious certainty of immortality which shines in Paul's letter to the Corinthians? All the teachings of the Bible upon human duty in exact accord? Compare the spirit and ideal of the eighth-century prophets from Amos to Isaiah with the spirit and ideal of Leviticus. Compare Joshua and James. Compare the Psalms of loving-kindness, viii., xviii., xxiv., li., ciii., and the imprecatory Psalms, lxix., cix., and

cxxxvii.* Compare the Book of Proverbs and the Sermon on the Mount. Are there no differences here, profound and radical? Surely the differences are many and great.

And from a rational point of view — the conception of the Bible as religious literature — such differences seem very natural. The Bible as a record of religious progress could hardly be otherwise. It is all the more natural and all the more valuable for every practical purpose because of these differences. Indeed, the Bible is a precious library of religious literature, reflecting the thought and aspiration of successive ages; and, as such, it could not be true to human history unless just these differences did exist. It would be unreasonable to expect uniformity of writers so differently situated and separated by such long periods.

This uniformity does not exist. There are differences here similar to those found in other great world literatures. There is no more evidence of a superintending special providence enforcing uniformity in the

*Professor A. B. Davidson, of Edinburgh, a loyal Scotch Presbyterian, is free to write, "A theology of the Old Testament, however, is really an impossibility, because the Old Testament is not a homogeneous whole." *Critical Review*, vol. i. No. I. p. 29.

Bible than in Hindu or Chinese literature. There is progress in its views of God, the future, the moral law; and this very progress, leading on to clearer and nobler religious ideals, is one source of its utility and one feature of its greatness. It possesses just that wide range of variety which precludes the possibility of its being a supernatural revelation, but which makes it a genuine and helpful illustration of man's religious growth and possibility.

WHAT THE BIBLE CLAIMS FOR ITSELF.

TOPICS.

1. The Harm done by Excessive Claims.
2. Does not claim to be the Word of God.
3. An Appeal to the Bible itself.
4. The New Testament Usage.
5. No General Claim made.
6. The Chief Allusion to Inspiration.
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WHAT THE BIBLE CLAIMS FOR ITSELF.

THE HARM DONE BY EXCESSIVE CLAIMS.

TWO things seem very evident and reasonable: first, that it is fair and just to judge the Bible by the claims which it makes for itself rather than by the assertions made about it by dogmatists; and, second, that it is an injury not only to the Bible, but to the cause of religion, to make for it any claims greater than what it makes for itself, or greater than what the facts themselves warrant.

On this last point, the harm done by excessive claims for the Bible, something has already been said at the opening of the last chapter; but the importance of the subject will justify some repetition. These words from Canon Driver are as wise as they are significant: "Nothing is more destructive of the just claims of Christianity

than a false theory of inspiration. Nothing has led to more fatal shipwrecks of faith than the acceptance in youth of *a priori* views of what an inspired book ought to be, which the study of maturer years has demonstrated only too cogently to be untrue to fact. . . . Men's respect for the Bible will be most securely won, and its authority most effectually established, by the truth about it being set before them and by claims not being raised on its behalf *which it does not raise for itself*. Men's respect for it, it is to be feared, is sometimes sadly diminished by the forced and unnatural expedients to which apologists have resorted for the purpose of reconciling the facts which the Bible actually presents with those which, according to their own theory of its origin and contents, ought to be found in it."* This is just what has very often happened in the last fifty years. Men who in their youth were taught a false view of the Bible, when they grew older, discovered that the traditional theory is untrue; and, as a result, they turned with disgust or bitterness, not only away from the Bible, but also from

*Driver, "Sermons on the Old Testament," p. 156, 1892.

the sanctities of religion associated with it. Wherever you find a man who represents himself as hating the Bible, you may be sure that early in life he was told that he must believe everything in it, or be eternally damned. So that the quickest way to bury the Bible is to urge dogmatically a false theory about it.

Another recent writer, of conservative and energetic piety, has well said: "They who think to protect the Bible by a dogma must in the end discredit it, for they imply that their dogma is really the foundation on which the Bible rests. As a matter of fact, the Bible stood before that crude dogma of infallible inspiration was invented; and the Bible will stand when that dogma has passed away." * It is a hopeful and significant fact that the teachers of religion are beginning to understand the situation, and are endeavoring to undo the harm done by erroneous assertions respecting Scripture. The scientific spirit is fast spreading, and nothing is now accepted except what can justify itself by an appeal to the facts. The Bible has nothing to fear

* Horton, "Revelation and the Bible," p. 25, 1892.

from the light of truth, but great injury has come to it and to man from the false assertions of dogmatic theology. The claim of infallibility has given undue prominence to its errors and imperfections, for it has challenged men in self-defence to expose and parade its outgrown puerilities; but, when this false claim is abandoned, then will appear a more rational appreciation and a more spiritual use of the Bible.

DOES NOT CLAIM TO BE THE WORD OF GOD.

It is commonly taken for granted that the Bible claims to be the *Word of God*, just as mediæval scholastics took it for granted that one side of the head is warmer than the other, simply because a great teacher once made this assertion. It has become a tradition to use this language about the Bible. The phrase has become a piece of religious currency, so that to deny this claim would seem to many like an act of impiety. This they imagine is the attestation which God himself has affixed to Scripture, and whoever refuses so to accept the Bible really calls God a liar. This is the way that the

clergy talk about the Bible; and this is the way that the people, as a rule, feel about the matter. And yet *this claim is not made in the Bible;* and the use of this phrase, the Word of God, to describe Scripture, *is wholly unscriptural and unscientific.*

It is a surprise and a misfortune that so progressive a scholar as Dr. Briggs should use his great influence to prolong this confusion; but this he does, and he even goes so far as to assert, "They [the Scriptures] claim to be the Word of God." * If asked for the specific texts wherein the claim is made in behalf of these Scriptural writings as a body, Dr. Briggs would find himself in a difficult position. For the Bible does not contain a particle of evidence in support of his assertion. The Bible *nowhere makes this claim for itself;* and the phrase, the Word of God, *is nowhere used in Scripture to designate either this or any other body of writings.* This term, or its more infrequent equivalent, the Word of the Lord, is used by the Biblical writers to describe the message which they have to deliver, the truth which they see and feel; but it is never ap-

* Briggs, "The Bible, the Church, and the Reason," p. 107, 1892.

plied to a written document or to a collection of writings.

The Scriptures nowhere contain even a hint that these books which compose our Bible, and no others, are the Word of God. The usage of the term is most decisive in teaching the exact opposite. This phrase is an Oriental or figurative manner of speech used by the Hebrews — an equivalent expression is universal in all Eastern Scriptures — to describe a great religious truth or a deep spiritual conviction.

Principal Fairbairn comes near the mark in these words: "The *Word of God* is a large term: it does not represent a closed, but a living history, not something that is dead, a letter that can be printed in black on white, a book which compositors have set up and binders have bound, and educated people can read. It is living: it has no being without the Spirit of God. Were that Spirit to be withdrawn, the Scriptures would cease to exist."* In other words, the Word of God is the truth of God, especially as it is put into life. The writers of

*Fairbairn, "The Seat and Source of Authority in Religion," the *Christian Union*, Oct. 17, 1891.

our Bible uniformly use this phrase to describe the *truth* rather than a *document;* and they never use it in a restricted sense, as applicable simply to some particular truth, and no other.

AN APPEAL TO THE BIBLE ITSELF.

Let us go to the record itself to verify this position. And it makes very little difference where we look in Scripture. The same usage meets our eyes everywhere. Take the prophecy of Ezekiel. This language is frequently used: "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying."* This could not refer to Pentateuch or Old Testament, for then neither was in existence. It is plain that no writing whatever, not even this prophecy, was intended. It is, however, perfectly clear what Ezekiel meant. And his meaning was simply this: a certain great idea or truth took possession of him; and this, after the common manner of his age and race, he referred directly to God.

The usage of Jeremiah is the same: "But

*Ezek. vi. 7.

his [God's] word was in mine heart as a burning fire." * This language could not refer to a manuscript; it evidently referred to the body of religious truths which Jeremiah felt called to deliver as a message to his people, — a message which God commissioned him to preach. It was the truest truth that he knew. The context makes this perfectly plain. The prophet meant no more and no less. And, in dealing with this subject, we must not transfer to those times our modern modes of thought; we must remember that then no distinctions, as at present, were made between the natural and the miraculous. When the Hebrew prophet said that Jehovah commanded him to teach certain things, when he wrote, "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying," we must not suppose that he had in mind any supernatural dispensation. Such distinctions and terms were not then in use. That language was applied to a purely human experience; for, just as he felt that Jehovah directly gave him the child born to him, so also he felt that Jehovah stood back of these deepest experiences of his life.

* Jer. xx. 9.

By these phrases he claimed no special gifts; he used them as descriptive of the common experiences of life. Jehovah was immanent everywhere.

When the later Isaiah wrote, "The word of our God shall stand forever," * he could not have meant a collection of writings like our Bible; for such a collection was not then in existence. He meant *the truth*, and, evidently, the truth as it was possible for all men to apprehend it. Nothing could be more irrational than to apply this language to our Bible as a book, or even exclusively to the truth which it contains. The Psalmist is in the same line when he exclaims, "The entrance of thy words giveth light." † The meaning would be the same if we made it read, The entrance of thy truth giveth light. And there is no reason why we should limit the scope of the word "truth" to the truths in these Biblical writings, and to no others.

In fact, in almost every instance where "the word of God" and its equivalents are used in the Bible, the exact meaning would be preserved if we substituted the single

* Isa. xl. 8. † Psalm cxix. 130.

word "truth." Where this does not give the meaning, the word "conviction" will usually do so. For example, "The word of God came to Nathan, saying."* The writer meant that a certain imperative conviction took possession of Nathan's mind. Such language was the usual manner of expression, and it implied no more than our more prosaic and secular phrases about our own human experience. That it could not refer to a writing, much less our Bible, is most evident.

This passage from Professor Robertson Smith describes what the prophets understood by *the word of God:* "No written book would satisfy the thirst for God's word of which Amos speaks. The only thing that can supersede the Torah (law or truth) of the prophets is the Torah written in every heart and spoken by every lip.† . . . God's word, not in a book, but in the heart and mouth of his servants, is the ultimate ideal as well as the first postulate of prophetic theology."‡ This, so far as I can see, is an exact statement of the true usage

* 1 Chron. xvii. 3. † See Isa. lix. 21.

‡ Smith, "Old Testament in the Jewish Church," p. 294, 1881.

of this term by the Old Testament writers. They never use it to describe a writing or a collection of writings, not even their own productions, but religious truth or spiritual conviction; and it is never used to describe either as a finished product.

THE NEW TESTAMENT USAGE.

The writers of the New Testament follow the same course. This may be shown by reference to a few texts. When Luke wrote, "The word of God came unto John," * what did he have in mind? Was he thinking of the body of writings known to us as the Old Testament? The question is too absurd to need an answer. Here, again, we have an Oriental figure of speech, not peculiar to the Hebrews, which means that a conviction so thoroughly possessed John the Baptist respecting a certain line of conduct that he felt it to be a command from God. When we feel similar convictions to-day, we say, I am fully persuaded: the language is different, but the experience is identical. A little farther on, in writing

* Luke iii. 2.

of Jesus' preaching, Luke uses the words, "The people pressed upon him to hear the word of God."* It is plain that what is meant here is not a writing or book, but the gospel itself,—the sublime truths which Jesus taught respecting the kingdom of heaven.

A similar usage is found in Acts, in a description of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas. "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you."† This means, of course, not a written document, but the truth about Jesus and the way of life which he described. In some cases, this term is used for truth in a more general sense. "By the word of God the heavens were of old."‡ Allusion is here made to an ancient notion, probably more Greek than Hebrew, that truth acted as the agent of God in the creation of the universe. However this may be, the writer did not have our Bible in mind. These passages illustrate all the uses of the term § that are found in the New Testament, and

* Luke v. 1. † Acts xiii. 46. ‡ 2 Peter iii. 5.

§ No exception is found in Mark vii. 13; for the reference is to *the truth* rather than a *mere book*, the commandment rather than the document containing it.

none of these uses gives us any warrant for calling the Bible the Word of God. No such claim is made in Scripture for itself.

The Biblical writers did claim to set forth that truth which is the word of God, but they never identify this with the documents which they composed. They never claim to exhaust the truth or make a final statement of the word of God, and they never claim for themselves a supernatural experience from which other men are cut off. Professor Ryle has searched through the Bible itself, Josephus, Philo, the Talmud, as well as the Apocrypha, for the various titles given to the Scriptures, and he has made of these titles a very interesting list; but nowhere did he find this term, Word of God, applied to these writings,*— a very interesting and a very significant fact.

Upon this general subject Canon Driver has written with clearness and authority: "Applied to the Bible as a whole, the expression 'Word of God' seems to savor of the old theory of inspiration, which no one now cares to maintain, according to which the

* Ryle, "The Canon of the Old Testament," Excursus E, 1892.

Holy Ghost dictated to the Biblical writers the very terms which they were to use. It seems to place every part of the Bible upon precisely the same spiritual level. It seems to imply an absoluteness, a finality, a perfectness, which, as the instances that I have referred to sufficiently show, do not inhere in every particular statement which Scripture contains. . . . And it should be carefully remembered that this use of the term is not Biblical." * As a matter of fact, then, it is, as already stated, both unscriptural and unscientific to call the Bible the Word of God. It makes no such claim for itself, and the character and history of these writings oppose rather than support this assertion in its behalf.

There are, to be sure, certain parts of the Pentateuch, a few chapters in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, which claim to record the will of God in a special and peculiar manner; but upon this point it may be said: (1) that modern scholarship is unanimous in the conclusion that those codes represent the product of a law-making as natural and as human as any legislation

* Driver, "Sermons on the Old Testament," p. 158, 1892.

in the world, and (2) that these parts of the Bible contain, as a rule, what Paul set aside, and what, so far as Christendom is concerned, is absolutely inoperative.

But in time the reverence justly paid to the noblest teachings of the Bible was transferred to the very document which contains them; and the term "word of God" was given not alone to the truth in it, but to the collection of writings as a whole. Yet this habit of speech did not become general until modern times, and for it there is neither Biblical nor apostolic authority. Professor Joseph Henry Thayer, of Harvard University, well says: "It was not before the polemic spirit became rife in the controversies which followed the Reformation that the fundamental distinction between the 'word of God' and the record of that word became obliterated, and the pestilent tenet gained currency that the Bible is absolutely free from every error of every sort." *

It is altogether wrong to take that tropical and Oriental phrase, "the word of God," and restrict it in meaning and turn it into

* Thayer, "Changed Attitude towards the Bible," p. 63, 1891.

a dogma, just as though the Biblical writers claimed to be giving forth a truth exclusively committed to them, and a truth, too, which must serve as a final description of the law of God. This is especially wrong, because those writers, as we have seen, made no such claims.* But it is a far greater wrong, both to the Bible and to man himself, to take this term, universally used in Scripture as equivalent to religious truth or spiritual conviction, and make it the name of a collection of documents of human origin and different values.

NO GENERAL CLAIM MADE.

As the Bible contains no description of its own contents, so also it contains no claim whatever for itself as a whole. The Bible nowhere describes the process of revelation, nor does it define the nature and extent of inspiration. Some Biblical writers claim to speak in the name of God; but their special relations to God they do not explain, nor do they state whether they con-

*The fact that later writers set aside the teachings of earlier writers proves that they did not consider these writings as infallible.

sidered them peculiar to themselves. And there are other writers who make no claim whatever for themselves.

There is one passage which, from its position, has led many to suppose that the Bible was compiled and closed just in its present shape by divine authority. That passage stands in the last chapter of Revelation: "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." *

Now, these words, standing at the end of the Bible, have been understood as referring to the Scriptures as a whole. They have been taken as an attestation and authorization of the entire Bible by the Almighty himself. Many have felt that here is the divine seal put upon Scripture by the Spirit of God. This is the claim which God makes in behalf of these writings. This does look like a clear case, until we begin to examine it.

But, when we consider the facts, we see that this passage can have no reference to

* Rev. xxii. 19.

the Bible as a whole, and that whatever claim it makes can refer only to this particular writing: (1) The Book of Revelation was not added by its writer to the Bible as the final member of the body of Scripture. He did not write it to close the New Testament collection, because no such collection was in existence until many years after his day. When Revelation was written, there was no New Testament to be closed, and no one as yet had thought of a new body of Scripture. The very beginning of such a collection was made after that time, so that these words could not have been intended to refer to the whole Bible, any more than the writer could have intended to close the canon of the Bible.

(2) Revelation stands at the end of our Bible, not because written for that place, not because an appropriate end, but simply because it was so long disputed. Its right to a place in the New Testament was long and extensively denied.* Even Luther did not admit it to be either apostolic or prophetic;† and it was finally admitted be-

* Reuss, History of the New Testament, Am. Tr., vol. ii. p. 316, 1884.

† Davidson, "The Canon of the Bible," p. 216, 1878.

cause of its association with the name of John rather than on account of its intrinsic worth. And it stands at the end simply because so long held in doubt. Hence it is only by accident that this passage closes the Bible. And in ancient times Revelation was not always placed at the end of the New Testament. In the decree of Gelasius it follows Paul's Epistles, and in the celebrated Clermont Manuscript it precedes Acts.*

(3) As a matter of fact, even if we accept the date of composition assigned to it by the most recent theory of the origin of Revelation, there were other writings, now in our New Testament, which were composed and added to Scripture *after* it was produced,— notably 2 Peter and 3 John.

(4) But most decisive of all, and sufficient of itself, is the fact that the passage only claims to refer to this particular writing: "the book of *this* prophecy" is the precise language. There is here no reference, even by implication, to the Scriptures as a whole. Thus we find that this passage is absolutely destitute of any bearing

* Davidson, "The Canon of the Bible," p. 230, 1878.

upon the topic under discussion. It is in no sense God's attestation of the Bible. It contains no claim that can be applied to the Scriptures.

THE CHIEF ALLUSION TO INSPIRATION.

The most decisive passage in the Bible on this subject is this,—no longer, however, attributed by the best scholars to Paul: "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."* This is the translation of the Revised Version, and it gives to the passage quite a different meaning from that of King James's Version.

This language has been, and is even now, strange to say, used to support the claim of infallible revelation. So great a scholar as Professor Briggs apparently appeals to it in support of his assertion: "They [the Scriptures] claim to be infallible in religion, faith, and morals."† But there is

*2 Tim. iii. 16, 17, Revised Version of 1881.

† Briggs, "The Bible, the Church, and the Reason," pp. 106, 107, 1892.

nothing in the passage about *infallibility*. The claim is not that Scripture is *infallible*, but that it is *profitable*,— and profitable not for *dogma*, but for "*instruction which is in righteousness*." There is nothing whatever in this particular language to justify its use in support of any theory of infallibility or supernatural revelation.

Look at a few considerations: (1) There is here no definition of inspiration. *We are not told what inspiration is.* (2) No list of the Scriptures is given. We are not told what writings are inspired. (3) The writer could not have had our New Testament in mind; for that collection was not then formed, and the writings composing it were not then used as Scripture. (4) This is more a *direction* respecting the use of certain writings, presumably the Septuagint, than a claim for the Bible as a whole.

This much is certain. The claim of infallibility receives here no support, nor does the assertion that the Bible is a rule of faith and practice superior to reason have any support in this passage. It is not said, The teaching of Scripture has su-

preme authority above reason. Nothing of the kind is implied. It is simply said, Scripture is *profitable* "for instruction which is in righteousness."

In fact, there is nothing more in this passage than a very natural and reasonable direction respecting the use of Scripture, which the most advanced radical can readily accept. And as Dr. Bascom well says, "Inspiration in this passage may as readily mean a normal as an abnormal action of the mind." * The conclusion of the whole matter, so far as this passage is concerned, is this: there is here no basis for those towering assumptions which theology has made in behalf of the Bible.

A FEW TEXTS BRIEFLY DISCUSSED.

There are several significant texts which deserve a passing glance in this connection, though they all lend support to a purely natural view of Scripture. In Job we read, "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." † It is plain that the writer had in mind a natural and universal proc-

* Bascom, "The New Theology," p. 29, 1891. † Job xxxii. 8.

ess rather than a peculiar and supernatural operation; for he is speaking of man as a man. The universality of inspiration would seem to be a Biblical doctrine, not alone from the above text, but from others like this: "The true light which *lighteth every man* that cometh into the world."* Here, as in Job, inspiration is attributed, not to any writing, much less to the Bible, *but to the divine in man.* And we have one text which expressly states that the divine truth, the real message of God to man, is not a closed, fixed, and literal document, but a living and expanding dispensation: "The word of God is not bound."†

There may seem to be a contradiction of this position in the following text: "For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit."‡ But here, as Dr. Bascom remarks, "The antithesis lies between the obedient and the disobedient temper, and not between human thought and divine thought."§ We have no grounds for holding that the writer believed that only the

* John i. 9. † 2 Tim. ii. 9. ‡ 2 Peter i. 21.
§ Bascom, "The New Theology," p. 29, 1891.

authors of our Bible had been "moved by the Holy Spirit." Indeed, we have no grounds for asserting that the writer looked upon the operation of the Holy Spirit as a supernatural process confined to a few persons. It is more probable that the writer meant by the Holy Spirit a spiritual temper of mind. And his thought was this, which we can all accept: Prophecy, sublime religious instruction, never originates in the mere wilful desire of the human heart, any more than true poetry; but it ever flows forth from the soul on fire with religious sentiment. And, though this interpretation may be at fault, yet there is in this text no claim for the Bible as a whole, and certainly no support to the assertion that the Scriptures are an infallible rule of faith and practice above reason.

The Bible is not lacking in very distinct recognitions of its own limitations. These limitations many of its writers confess. Even Paul was free to write: "For we know *in part, and we prophesy in part.* But when that which is perfect *is come*, then that which is in part shall be done away." *

* 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.

This great apostle, here and in other places,* admits his imperfection. He never used texts to override, but to convince reason; and there is no hint in any of his letters that he claimed special inspiration for himself or expected his words to be used as an infallible authority. This expectation of fuller knowledge, carrying the idea of progress rather than finality in the apprehension of truth, or revelation, is found in these words, attributed to Jesus, in the Fourth Gospel: "When he, the Spirit of truth, *is come*, he *will guide* you into all truth." † There is certainly no reason why we should set up a bar at the close of the first century, and say that this guidance stopped forever at that point.

Now, these passages include all that can be used in support of the claims of the Bible for itself or in illustration of the doctrine of inspiration. What, then, do we find? (1) Large parts of the Bible make no claims whatever for themselves, notably such writings as Job, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, and the historical books of the Old Testament; while even in the New Testa-

* See Rom. xii. 6; Phil. iii. 13. † John xvi. 13.

ment Acts claims, simply by implication, to be true history.* Paul makes no claims for his letters, and even the Gospels only pretend to give the facts.† On this point Professor Toy writes: "When we turn to the Scriptures themselves, we do not find in the later book of the Old Testament a specific claim to be regarded as infallible standards and guides. . . . The New Testament writers in like manner (with the exception of the Apocalyptist) lay no claim directly to divine inspiration. In the First and Second Gospels the writers say nothing of their mode of composition. The author of the Third describes his procedure as that of the ordinary historian." ‡

(2) The Bible contains no assertion whatever respecting its character or authority as a whole. It does not even claim *to contain* the *word of God* in any peculiar or exclusive sense or by supernatural intervention. There are parts of the Pentateuch which claim to give the will of God, and lay down the rule of life for man in a most authoritative manner; but these are parts which, as

* See Driver, "Introduction," p. xii., 1891.
† See Luke i. 1–4; John xxi. 24.
‡ Toy, "Judaism and Christianity," p. 129, 1890.

a rule, the early church set aside as not binding upon Christians.

(3) It is not possible, from the few texts which bear upon the subject, to construct any definite Biblical theory of inspiration. The Biblical writers do not discuss the subject, which seems very strange, if it be true that they were producing an authoritative revelation. Aside from the Pentateuch, there is absolutely nothing, either in the claims of the writers or their use of one another, to support the assumption of traditional theology that these writings were meant to be an infallible rule of faith and practice superior to reason.

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS ON THIS PROBLEM.

There is another topic — the authority of Jesus respecting the Scriptures — which remains to be discussed here briefly. It is an important topic, to be treated with sobriety and tenderness; but there is certainly no need for such timidity and hesitation as Professor Sanday displays.* There is a very common feeling that somehow Jesus

* Sanday, "The Oracles of God," chap. viii., 1891.

passed upon the claims of Scripture, vouched for its infallibility, and placed his divine approval upon the Bible. Many imagine that all these questions were settled once for all by him, and that for us to debate and doubt is really to disown his authority and dishonor his name. There are pious souls who feel that to reject the traditional view of the Bible would be a denial of their Lord and Master which would cost them their eternal salvation. They identify their view of Scripture with the gospel itself, and they believe that the honor of Jesus and the permanence of Christianity depend upon the maintenance of the traditional theory.

But this subject is connected with no such momentous consequences, and it is a mistake to suppose that the traditional view of the Bible is so closely bound up with the fortunes of religion. Jesus entered into no discussion of the origin or nature of Scripture. The New Testament did not exist in his day, nor did he intimate that any such collection would ever exist. It is impossible to show that he ever approved the traditional view of inspiration. Reverence for him carries with it no obligation to believe

that dogma. The fortunes of the gospel are not dependent upon its maintenance. The application of free inquiry to the Bible implies no dishonor to Jesus, and involves Christianity in no danger or loss.

THE LIMITATION OF JESUS.

All that can be said in reference to Jesus' use of Scripture is this: His attitude was, in the main, that of the Jewish scholars of his time, except that he used a greater freedom, while he appealed more to the facts of life than to texts. He at times set aside regulations found in the so-called Mosaic Law;* and, though he used Scripture in argument, yet his teaching differed profoundly from that of the rabbis of his day, in that it was not commentary and mere interpretation, but a fresh and original view of life, enforced by an appeal to the living oracles of experience. His *sayings* create the impression that he found his wisdom and authority, not by looking into Scripture, but by looking directly and deeply into the heart.

*Matt. v. 39.

This much is certain: Jesus did not use Scripture for dogma, but for life; and, so far as we can see, he never used texts to coerce reason or override sentiment or stifle inquiry, — never as an authority by which to enforce his opinions.

And yet Jesus was undoubtedly a loving student of Scripture, maintaining toward it the reverent attitude common among his people. From his few allusions to the subject, it is reasonable to suppose that, with the Jews of that age, he attributed the Pentateuch, or Law, to Moses, and many of the Psalms to David. This much seems perfectly clear.*

Here, then, is the problem which is forced upon us by the conclusions of modern Biblical scholarship, — that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, and that David did not write the Psalms which Jesus apparently attributed to him. How can we accept these conclusions, and still continue to believe in the absolute deity of Jesus? Either Jesus was mistaken or modern scholarship is in error; and, if Jesus was mistaken, then we must surrender our belief in

* See Matt. xxii. 43 and Mark x. 3; also John v. 46, 47.

his perfection. Here is, from the orthodox point of view, a momentous difficulty.

Various explanations are offered: (1) The rigid conservatives insist that we must accept the authority of Jesus as supreme and final. No matter what the Higher Criticism may seem to discover and prove, Jesus passed authoritatively upon these matters; and, when he assigned the Law to Moses and the one hundred and tenth Psalm to David, no matter how strong the evidence may be in the other direction, we must accept his judgment as final. These conservatives press the claim with great vehemence. Reject Wellhausen and Cheyne, or deny Christ. There is no middle ground. This is, however, felt by very many to be a very dangerous and unwise course to pursue. Mr. Bacon well says, "We must decline to stake the authority of Jesus Christ on a question of literary criticism."* In view of the present reverence for facts, created by modern science, there is no doubt respecting the final outcome, when the matter is pressed in this manner. The modern mind will follow the facts, even if all the

* Bacon, "Genesis of Genesis," p. 33, 1892.

dogmas of the Church have to be rejected.

But it is an encouraging indication that an increasing number of scholars disapprove of this position. Scholars are becoming more and more disinclined to appeal to Jesus on such matters. It is felt to be unwise to use his authority for such purposes. As Rev. Dr. Plummer writes, "In the whole history of human thought it never has happened, and it never will happen, that a question once raised has been settled or silenced *by authority*." *

(2) There are others who accept the conclusions of modern scholarship, but hold that Jesus simply used the language of his time because he did not care to discuss the authorship of Scripture, though he was aware of the facts as discovered by the Higher Criticism. On this view it is sufficient, I think, to quote the objection of Professor Sanday: "I should be loath to believe that our Lord *accommodated* his language to current notions, knowing them to be false." †

* Plummer, "The Advance of Christ in ΣΟΦΙΑ," the *Expositor*, p. 13, July, 1891.

† Sanday, "The Oracles of God," p. 111, 1891.

(3) The tendency among even conservative scholars, to-day, is to admit that Jesus shared the opinions of the Jews of his time on these matters, and that he fell into these mistakes as a part of that human limitation involved in his humiliation. This was real ignorance, due to his *emptying himself of his Godhead* in order to become a real man, — a view of his nature now becoming popular, which is described by the word "*Kenosis*," used by Paul in his mystical interpretation of the nature of Jesus.* As Dr. Plummer remarks: "It is at least *conceivable* that Jesus so emptied himself of the attributes of his divinity as to be dependent for knowledge upon his earthly experience and the information which he obtained from others. In that case, he would know no more about the authorship of the sacred writings than his Jewish instructors could tell him; and he would share their ignorance, as he shared their customs and climate." † The admission of Jesus' limitation, even ignorance, is here most explicitly and frankly made.

* Phil. ii. 7.

† Plummer, "The Advance of Christ in ΣΟΦΙΑ," the *Expositor*, p. 13, July, 1891.

Another eminent English scholar disapproves of the use of Jesus' language as final authority respecting the Scriptures as against modern scholarship, and he admits that here Jesus probably shared the false views of his age. "It is not, I believe, contrary to the catholic doctrine of our Lord's person to suppose that in such matters his knowledge was the knowledge of his time. There can, it seems to me, be no impropriety or irreverence in such a view, when we are expressly told that he *advanced in wisdom* as well as *in stature* (Luke ii. 52)."* Probably one of the most decisive admissions of the limitations of Jesus' knowledge ever made by a prominent Churchman has recently been set forth by Principal Gore, of Oxford. He writes, "By an act of deliberate self-abnegation, he [Jesus] so emptied himself as to assume the permanent characteristics of the human or servile life";† that is, Jesus not only assumed the *form*, but the *intellectual limitations*, of a man.

And, as one of the results of his abandon-

*Kirkpatrick, "The Divine Library of the Old Testament," p. 9, 1891.

†Gore, "The Incarnation of the Son of God," Bampton Lectures, p. 157, 1891.

ment of some of his divine prerogatives, his views of Scripture were those commonly current among his people, so that to the argument "that the use by our Lord of such a phrase as 'Moses wrote of me' binds us to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch as a whole . . . I do not think that we need yield."* Thus, one by one, even prominent conservatives take the position that Jesus shared at least some of the intellectual limitations of his own people,† and also that his views of Scripture were simply those current in his day. Therefore, his authority in this particular field is not any higher than the Jewish scholarship of his time, so that what he said cannot reasonably be used against the conclusions of modern scholarship.

THE THEORY OF "KENOSIS."

These admissions by orthodox scholars are very interesting and significant, for they

*Gore, "The Incarnation of the Son of God," Bampton Lectures, p. 195, 1891.

† "Jesus, as well as his Jewish contemporaries, lacked that conception of the universal correlation of earthly phenomena through natural law which forms the modern basis of natural research." Wendt, "The Teaching of Jesus," Eng. Tr., vol. i. p. 167, 1892.

show the tendency and direction of modern thought. And they imply more than those who make them are aware. This very doctrine of *Kenosis*,— Jesus emptying himself of his Godhead to become a real man, and so taking on the real limitations of humanity,— this doctrine has been devised to explain the facts recorded in the Gospels,— facts which evidence human limitation too clearly and forcibly to be ignored,— *and to explain them in such a way as at the same time to preserve his deity*. In view of these evidences of pure humanity in the Gospels, some theory had to be formulated to bring them into harmony with the assumptions of pre-existent sonship in the Godhead. Hence recourse to this theory of *Kenosis*, by which such limitations are held to be compatible with real deity.

The device is ingenious, and the doctrine has been accepted as an adequate solution of the difficulty. But its advocates little realize what a two-edged sword it is. *If Jesus was so completely emptied of his Godhood as to have such limitations and share man's ignorance about Scripture, what becomes of his authority?* If so human as to have no

authority here, why not so human as to have limitations everywhere? If so emptied of Godhood as to be mistaken about Scripture, why not so emptied as to be mistaken in many other respects?

Is it not true that this doctrine of *Kenosis* sweeps away the very basis of Jesus' supremacy?* It was devised to harmonize evidences of limitation with the assumption of deity; but, in emptying Jesus thus far of divinity, what is left on which to build supreme authority in any direction?

And, again, see what havoc this doctrine of *Kenosis* plays with the scheme of atonement. An infinite being had to die to render an infinite satisfaction to the infinite law of justice which had been violated. How often we have been told that only the sufferings of an infinite God could redeem us from the infinite penalty charged up against us! But, if Jesus had so emptied himself of his Godhood as to share man's ignorance about Scripture, how could he, in that *emptied condition*, render infinite satisfaction to an infinite law? Does it not look very much as though these theorists, in

*I mean as construed by the traditional creeds.

trying to frame a doctrine which will admit the facts of human limitation without denying the deity of Jesus, have really destroyed the supernatural authority of Jesus, and also wrecked the traditional scheme of atonement?

This much is plain to any one who reads the signs of the times: the facts in the Gospels which imply and illustrate certain human limitations on Jesus' part are coming to be seen and appreciated as very stubborn facts, which cannot be ignored or explained away. They are making an impression upon thinking minds everywhere. As a result, the policy of appealing to his authority as decisive in matters of Biblical scholarship is being abandoned. It is coming to be generally felt that it is unwise to expose his spiritual prestige to so great a risk, while it is wrong to encumber the way of scholarship with such an obstacle. The evidence accumulates rapidly in these days that the time has come when even his usage of Scripture will no longer be put as a bar across the way of progress; and we may well rejoice over this change in public opinion, on account not only of free in-

quiry, but for the sake of the gospel itself.*

THE BETTER EXPLANATION.

But there is another way of viewing these errors of tradition respecting the authorship of Scripture which Jesus shared with his people, and the mistakes in the use of texts into which he sometimes fell, if we may believe the evangelists.† The more reasonable and natural explanation is to consider these not as limitations of a being who had emptied himself of his Godhood, but as the inevitable limitations of a great

* The wide recognition of the limitations of Jesus may be seen from the following: —

Wendt, "The Teaching of Jesus," Eng. Tr., vol. i. sec. ii. chap. ii., 1892; Smith, "Our Lord's Authority," the *Expositor*, July, 1889; Swayne, "An Inquiry into our Lord's Authority as Man," 1889; Moorehouse, "The Teaching of Christ," Sermons I. and II., 1891; Plummer, "The Advance of Christ in ΣΟΦΙΑ," the *Expositor*, July, 1891; Gore, "The Incarnation of the Son of God," Bampton Lectures, Lecture VI., 1891. The words of Principal Gore are significant, however self-contradictory and unsatisfactory they may seem to many. See, also, some remarkable statements by Howard Crosby, "The True Humanity of Jesus," pp. 26–44.

† The language attributed to Jesus in Luke xviii. 31, in which he instructs his disciples that, when he goes up to Jerusalem, "All things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished," *if really uttered by him*, illustrates his misunderstanding of Scripture, *because* Hebrew prophecy contains *no predictions whatever* of the things said to have occurred at that time, no reference to his betrayal, trial, crucifixion, or resurrection.

historic character, — the imperfections of a real man ascending heavenward rather than the ignorance of a God becoming human. This view does not efface the spiritual beauty and attractiveness of Jesus, nor does it interfere with his ministry of spiritual helpfulness.

But to jump from the solid earth into the dim spaces of theosophic mysticism, and resort to the "vain imaginations of man" respecting his emptying himself of his Godhood to account for these limitations, — this is a long departure from the plain facts of the first three Gospels. It is an unwarranted and needless overthrow of historic order, while it is an entanglement with subtilties of speculation which dims the person of Jesus and unjoints the very mechanism of sane thought. It is better for religion, better for the Bible, and better for Jesus that we turn our back upon all this needless and lifeless *theologizing*, and frankly but reverently call this the inevitable limitation of a real but divinely gifted man.

This is just what Professor Toy, of Harvard University, does; and he represents an

attitude that is becoming general among scholars. In discussing Jesus' use and interpretation of Old Testament texts, Professor Toy holds that modern scholarship "must be the final authority, even if it should seem to us to come in conflict with him"; and he goes on to remark: "To take any other position, out of reverence for his person, would be to deny his spirit and forget his teaching. . . . As an individual man, he had of necessity a definite, restricted intellectual outfit and outlook; and these could be only those of his day and generation. To think of him as acquainted with modern science, or, rather, with perfect science, is to destroy his human individuality and go in the teeth of the record."* And, though we cannot appeal to Jesus as one who has defined the scope of inspiration, settled questions of Biblical scholarship, or laid down an authoritative usage of Scripture, yet his services in a higher realm are unquestioned and unimpeded. The spirit of his life is health and strength. His ministry of moral helpfulness increases as we disengage ourselves from tradition and

* Toy, "Quotations in the New Testament," p. xxviii., 1884.

rescue his name from misleading theological associations.

The view of Jesus which involves least perplexity, and best fits into the order of universal history; the view which requires no apology in the face of science and asks nothing unreasonable of reason; the view which has for its support the statements of the earliest Gospels and the most ancient traditions; the view which sets his personality before us in the loveliness of heroism and the beauty of holiness, putting a real meaning into his temptation and actual piety into his daily conduct and a substantial glory into his crucifixion; the view which brings him near to us as the divine flowering of that human nature which we share with him, and so makes his sweet memory an infinite inspiration toward the realization of our own possibilities by our becoming like him, the ideal and motive of essential Christianity, conceived as the worship of the Good in order to be and to do good,— this view of Jesus as an ascending man, showing us how to reach the infinite life and helping us to create the kingdom of heaven, holds the inexhaustible

resources of moral excellence and spiritual enthusiasm; and this view, rather than that dogma which defines him as a God emptied of his Godhood, will command the future. There is no one who wishes to degrade Jesus or lessen the love of men for his character. In paying the tribute of our admiration to him, we but honor what is divinest in ourselves; and yet, however high a place we may assign him, just as soon as we remove him from the plane of pure humanity, that moment we plunge into innumerable difficulties, both in science and in religion. The measure of his helpfulness to us is not in our theory of his miraculous origin or mystic office, but in what he does to show us what the divine life is, in what he does to enable us to realize the spiritual possibilities of our common human nature.

THE BIBLE AS AUTHORITY.

TOPICS.

1. Brief Statement of Discoveries.
2. Changes already effected.
3. Gain and Gladness because Misuse of the Bible has stopped.
4. A Criticism of Professor Briggs.
5. What is the Church?
6. The Authority of Reason.
7. The True Relation of Reason and Scripture.
8. If Errors in Scripture, how can it be Infallible?
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10. Cannot all be translated into Life.
11. Scripture not our only Guide.
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THE BIBLE AS AUTHORITY.

BRIEF STATEMENT OF DISCOVERIES.

IT is for us now to consider the question, To what new uses must we put this new Bible? It is generally admitted by conservatives that the Bible is not what the more dogmatic and *Hebraic* reformers took it to be. Modern discoveries have traced anew its origins, have laid bare unexpected documents as the sources from which many of its books were compiled, and have assigned new dates and different meaning to many of its writings.* Scientific criticism finds that the so-called Mosaic Law, or Pentateuch, instead of being written by Moses, is a slowly aggregated collection of laws, traditions, and legends,—a composite structure which was building for over three

*All Biblical students look with great interest toward that great venture which Professor Paul Haupt and an able band of associates have undertaken,—a new translation of the Bible, indicating by rearrangement and certain typographical agencies the chronological development of these writings and the sources from which many were compiled.

centuries; and even its foundations were laid many generations after the time of Moses. In view of these facts respecting its origin and character, it is perfectly evident that it is not a supernatural revelation; and it is perfectly evident also that, however we may use it, we have no right to make it *an authority* superior to reason.

The prophecies lie before us as the impassioned utterances of great teachers sublimely intent on righteousness of life, still capable of affording instruction and inspiration; but the element of miraculous prediction, once supposed to be their chief concern, has vanished from these pages, and we see that the writers, however gifted, were fallible men, who made mistakes respecting the course of events, while their ideas of God and human life cannot be considered perfect in all respects.

The Gospels, felt by many to be the most precious part of Scripture, wear a different look to-day than in the seventeenth century. They are invaluable reflections of the person and spirit of Jesus, the first three especially, reasonably accurate accounts of what he was and taught; but scholarship locates

them, in their present shape, beyond the circle of eye-witnesses, and at the end of quite a long period subsequent to the crucifixion; and during that period reverent fancy had been at work weaving legends, while ardent hopes had misconstrued some of Jesus' sayings; so that these writings, slowly compiled and finally edited by men, separated quite a distance from him in years and range of thought, bear the traces of apostolic *afterthoughts*, and reflect the image of Jesus, somewhat blurred, not only by failing memories, but also by distorting traditions. When most carefully handled by cautious and reverent criticism, even the first three yield, in many respects, only very imperfect and uncertain results. In them we see through a glass darkly; but the Fourth, the product of a more deliberate dogmatism, gives us a late *belief about Jesus* rather than a report of his life.

Other facts of great importance have been discovered. We understand the growth of this body of Scripture as it never was understood before. We can trace the passage of its various writings from common literature to sacred Scripture, and we see the purely

natural causes at work. We know how slowly and by what uncertain steps certain books gained a place in the canon; we appreciate the purely human character of the text as never before; and we are aware of chronological errors, discrepancies, and contradictions in statements, together with imperfections of judgment and sentiment, such as our fathers did not, or would not, see. In other words, it is a *new Bible* which lies before the modern scholar.

CHANGES ALREADY EFFECTED.

It is reasonable to expect that these discoveries will profoundly change our uses of Scripture, and materially modify our view of its authority. It is evidently still valuable for historical purposes, though it is not so absolutely accurate that we *must* believe everything in it; while it certainly affords no adequate evidence for miracles which, as Matthew Arnold so aptly wrote, "are touched by Ithuriel's spear." * There are those who feel that if the traditional view of the Bible is given up, then we

*Arnold, "Literature and Dogma," p. 279, 1876.

must regard it all as "spuriousness and deception." * But no such necessities as these exist: believe all or reject all,— accept all as divine or regard all as fraud and falsehood. Apologists in this way strive to frighten the credulous and keep them still obedient to tradition. They say: You must go with us, or throw the Bible away as "spuriousness and deception," evidently thinking that when such alternatives are presented and pressed the plain man will be frightened into continued loyalty to the creed. But this is a method altogether too childish for children. The most *advanced* school of Biblical critics most gladly concede the historical value of the Bible, though contending that it is a document which must be used with free discrimination, according to the well-established canons of historical study.

The conclusion that the Bible is a collection of *human documents* — human, however precious — does not necessitate neglect of the Bible; but it is a reasonable inference

* Bishop of Colchester, "Review of Driver's Introduction," *Contemporary Review*, July, 1892. Such unfair and intemperate criticisms as this ecclesiastic uses reflect little honor upon the Church of England and win few friends to the Bible.

that these discoveries compel uses of the Bible different from those followed by people who saw in it an infallible revelation. What modern scholarship compels is neither the *abuse* nor the *disuse*, but *a new use* of Scripture. And a mere glance at the implications and bearings of the conclusions of recent criticism indicates the general directions of these changes in the use of the Bible.

We go to the Bible less and less as an *authority* in history that *must* be believed, but we use it more and more as one of the great *historical sources* of information respecting the evolution of religion. We go to it less and less to find a *final word* on science, but we use it more and more for *edification*. It is the bread of life rather than a hoop to thought. We go to it less and less for *saving dogmas* to be used as tests of fellowship and bases of religious organization; but we use it more and more as an *educational agency*, wherein, writ large in letters of living light, we find precious lessons full of both warning and inspiration.

And some of these changes in use have

been almost completely effected. While once its authority was supreme in science, its texts being quoted against discoveries as final, and contradiction of its teaching being punished as a blasphemous crime, yet to-day no one finds any reference to it in scientific discussions; and even apologists make haste to withdraw it from the field as never intended for the scientific instruction of mankind. Thus all use of the Bible as an authority in the realm of science has ceased; and this result is a great benefit to both science and religion.

Its use for historical purposes has not ceased, but the exclusive and authoritative use once made of the Bible has come to an end. To know the story of the Hebrews as given by it once seemed sufficient knowledge of the history of humanity, but now this story occupies but a small place in the field of general history which an intelligent man is supposed to know; while even in the history of religion it has been placed beside the records of other dispensations.

There was a time when the Bible ruled in the realm of jurisprudence. From it men derived all theories of government,

judges felt bound by texts of the Pentateuch,* popular opinion was dominated by Scriptural teaching, and in the shaping of laws an eye was kept on Hebrew precept and apostolic injunction.† But all this has passed away. The roots of our democratic institutions are not Biblical, and the great principles of freedom and equality which rule our modern life have not been derived from texts of Scripture. Our judges would not listen to a jurist who quoted Leviticus or Deuteronomy as authority. Servetus, Locke, Voltaire, and Lessing did not learn the grand lesson of universal toleration from psalm or Gospel. William of Orange and Cromwell, though Bible students, worked for civil liberty under the leadership of a light that shone from other sources than texts. The modern theory of the State, from Puffendorf to Bluntschli, has been wrought out, not only in independence of the Bible, but in op-

*The early history of New England affords many sad and some grotesque illustrations of this fact.

† So late and so able a writer as Blackstone considered the authority of the Bible conclusive respecting witchcraft. Cooley's "Blackstone," Book IV., p. 60. How far we are from that form of thought, for who would use such language to-day?

position to the opinions of its official interpreters. The great reformers of the world's jurisprudence — Beccaria, Montesquieu, Bentham, and Romilly — did not derive their inspiration from Hebrew codes, or even the Sermon on the Mount. There is no longer, even in Christendom, any appeal to the Bible as a law-book where authoritative forms of government or principles of jurisprudence may be found.

And in religion itself the Bible is not used as it once was. It is coming to occupy a different place in the realm of religious instruction from that which it did occupy among Puritans and Presbyterians. In the church the Bible is now being used with greater discrimination. Emphasis falls more and more on its more ethical and spiritual parts, on the prophetic pleas for righteousness rather than on the prophets' hatred of the heathen, on the psalms of loving-kindness rather than on the cruelties described in Numbers and Joshua, on the Epistle of James rather than the Apocalypse, on Paul's expositions of conduct rather than on his rabbinical arguments, and on Jesus' parables rather than on

the discourses respecting the last things attributed to him.*

While churches still cling to the traditional view that it is all a revelation of equal value everywhere, yet the *usage* of their leaders follows a nobler and truer principle. They silently ignore large portions of Scripture, and the lines of emphasis are run along those chapters which deal with duties and contain spiritual aspirations.† The law of *progress in revelation* is widely admitted, and accordingly there is an increasing disposition to leave untouched certain parts of the Bible as outgrown.‡ Ministers, in their selections of Scripture lessons, assume this principle, and illustrate in their usage a more rational view of the Bible than assemblies and conferences have approved.§ Among the more progressive clergymen of all denominations to-day the

*Matt. xxiv.; Mark xiii.; Luke xxi. See Carpenter, "The First Three Gospels," chap. vii., 1890.

†Dr. Lyman Abbott recently astonished the religious world by asserting that the Ten Commandments are no adequate law for the Christian life. The *Christian Union*, Jan. 23, 1892.

‡The idea of progress in revelation is advocated by conservatives such as Oehler, Riehm, Beyschlag, Schultz, Robertson, Duff, and Briggs.

§Such a work as Professors Bartlett and Peters's "Scriptures, Hebrew and Christian," arranged and edited for young readers (1886), represents a significant step forward.

Bible is more spiritually and less dogmatically used. Its texts are made to throw light on the path of life rather than to repress doubt and impede inquiry.

The Bible is coming to be used with greater freedom. It is studied for the discovery of its own message rather than, as formerly, for the confirmation of the opinions of Augustine and Calvin. The Bible is used less exclusively than in past ages. It is recognized that there is a great world of truth outside its pages; and, with no thought of dishonor to the Bible, these other resources are laid under tribute for illustration of moral law and inspiration to holiness. It is an interesting and significant fact, obvious to every critical observer, that, while the churches have not revised the statements of their creeds respecting the Bible, nevertheless, under the pressure of discoveries about the Bible, the recovery of the other Bibles of the race, and the general influences of modern life and thought, a new usage of the Bible is coming into prominence, a more rational, educational, and spiritual use of these ancient Scriptures.

GAIN AND GLADNESS BECAUSE MISUSE OF THE BIBLE HAS STOPPED.

And it is no loss, but infinite gain to religion and civilization, that certain uses of the Bible are coming to an end. The waning influence of certain texts is a great blessing. We all rejoice that the interpolated text in the Hindu Scriptures respecting Suttee, or the burning of widows, has lost its authority. Our joy is equally great that texts in our Bible respecting witches have lost their influence. It is no loss that some parts of Scripture have ceased to be regarded as sacred and authoritative.

I am profoundly glad that many uses of the Bible have stopped. I am glad that the expressions of hatred toward the heathen in psalms and prophecies * are no longer used as fuel to feed the fires of bigotry and intolerance. I am glad that certain Old Testament characters, — Abraham, who lied about his wife; † David, who was in many respects a barbarian; ‡ Elijah, who butchered

* Ps. ix. 15, x. 16, lix. 8, lxxviii. 55, cxlix. 7; Micah v. 15; Hab. iii. 12; Hag. ii. 12; Obad. 16.

† Gen. xx. 2.

‡ 2 Sam. iv. 9–12, xi. 2–21.

the priests of Baal;* Elisha, who cursed the foolish young men of Bethel,†—I am glad that these men are no longer held up before the rising generation as examples of piety, as men after God's own heart.‡ The story of their lives is instructive, and, considering the times in which they lived, there is much to admire in them; but an authoritative appeal to them as examples and patterns for to-day must do more harm than good. The *waning influence* of those distant characters, as peculiarly divine men, whom we are to follow,—this is no loss, but great gain. I am glad that Scriptural texts are no longer used to justify slavery and despotism. I rejoice that the authority of the Bible is no longer used to stop the lips and crush the soul of a Galileo, or to light the fagots about the feet of a Servetus, or to cover a Lyell and a Darwin with virulent abuse.

But uses of the Bible exist to-day which ought to cease. Their discontinuance would

* 1 Kings xviii. 18. † 2 Kings ii. 24.

‡ Dr. Newman Smyth, in "The Morality of the Old Testament" (1886), has written with a commendable frankness on this subject, though some of his excuses and explanations seem to me little calculated to help religion or commend the Bible.

mean progress and gladness. I want to see the use of its wonder-stories as proofs of miracles stopped; for it is unfortunate that the Sunday-school should, by its antique supernaturalism, be undoing much that the high-school is teaching respecting the reign of law in nature. The use of the Bible in behalf of miracles is driving young people away from religion, and the sooner that *misuse* of Scripture is stopped the better. I would be glad to see the Protestant Episcopal Church drop from its Prayer-book such inappropriate and barbarous lessons as Numbers xxxi., which it reads annually on the 10th of March. How incongruous, how irrational, how degrading — if any attention is paid to the words — for a clergyman to stand up and read to women and children of to-day the bloody story of the slaughter of the Midianites *as an inspired message from God!* The sooner such practices stop, the sooner people are made to see that these passages have no utility or authority, the better it will be for the world.

I shall be glad when the few texts in the Bible respecting the depravity of human

nature — the figurative language of poetry, as a rule — are no longer used to support a theory of the soul as contrary to the facts of history as it is to the gospel of Jesus. Man is weak and sinful. His *total depravity* would make our Creator a monster and democratic institutions an impossibility. The sooner these Biblical phrases, quoted in support of such a theory, lose their authority, the better for us all.

I shall be glad when the words of Jesus about *Gehenna** are no longer used as proofs of the eternal and infinite torments of those who die without belief in the atoning blood of the Cross. The universal rejection of this most horrible tale of doom extracted from these phrases will be an infinite gain to humanity. The use of the Bible to compel belief in an impossible hell cannot stop too soon. Whether a Biblical doctrine or not, it is a horrible doctrine; and when men cease their appeals to texts in its behalf, then the heart of man will become more human.

I shall be glad when the Jewish sacrifi-

* Matt. x. 28, xviii. 9, etc. See Farrar, "The Eternal Hope," Excursus II.

cial system, a relic of barbarism condemned by the great prophets and psalmists,* is no longer used as a *foretype* of the ministry of Jesus. It was quite natural for the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews to bring Jesus into connection with the temple service, as a fulfilment of that system, in order to win his people to the side of the gospel. It was a popular and forcible *ad hominem* argument for his own time and people. But the application of these sacrificial terms to Jesus has no warrant in his teaching; † while they misinterpret his real ministry and misrepresent the spiritual laws of our own being. The use of the Bible for the support of this *bloody theology* ‡ is a

* Amos v. 21–23; Hosea vi. 6; Isa. i. 11–14, lxvi. 3; Ps. xl. 6, li. 15.

† The only *apparent* warrant is Matthew xx. 28, "To give his life a ransom for many." But in this very connection Jesus explains that *giving his life* is a service of love,—*the same that he asks of his disciples.* Here is natural self-sacrifice in the line of common helpfulness, but no supernatural sacrifice as described by traditional theology.

‡ Vigorous criticisms of the dogma of sacrificial redemption may be found in the following works: Matthew Arnold, "St. Paul and Protestantism," 1870; Channing, Works, "Unitarian Christianity"; Martineau, "Seat of Authority in Religion," Book IV. chap. iii., 1890; "Scotch Sermons," No. XXIII., 1881; Hedge, "Reason in Religion," Book II. chaps. vi.–x., 1865; Reuss, "The Apostolic Age," Eng. Tr., vol. ii. chap. xv., 1874; Stopford Brooke, "Freedom and Faith," chap. xiii.; Toy, "Judaism and Christianity," chaps. iv., viii., 1890.

dogmatic misuse without warrant in Hebrew prophecy or the gospel of Jesus. It obscures the real Jesus; it enthrones a God of wrath where Jesus placed a Father of love; it emphasizes propitiation instead of personal righteousness; and it misconstrues the problem of salvation by diverting attention from growth of character to release from penalty. This use of the crudest, most superstitious, and most material elements of the Bible in support of a sacrificial interpretation of Jesus' life cannot be stopped too soon for the true glory of Jesus and the substantial good of pure religion.*

There are also other uses of the Bible which ought to cease: the use of many New Testament texts for the justification of intolerance and the hatred of heretics;† the use of the words addressed to Eve as a prediction of Jesus,‡ — as unlawful and foolish

*It is worth noting that *the explanation now given to sacrifice among the Hebrews* by our ablest writers attributes to it a meaning wholly unlike that assumed by traditional theology, so that the Jewish sacrifices could not be a *foretype* of that scheme of redemption which has been most irrationally ascribed to the death of Jesus. See Smith, "Religion of the Semites," Lecture VI., 1889.

†Gal. i. 9; Rom. xvi. 17; Titus iii. 10; 2 John 10.

‡Gen. iii. 15, "It [the seed of the woman] shall bruise thy head [the head of the serpent]." To find here a prediction of Jesus is a superlative superstition. The story of which this is a part is a piece of mythology, as natural in its origin and as destitute of supernatural

a misuse of Scripture as ever was made; the use of Paul's language respecting woman * as a rule of action in Church and State to-day; the use of vague apocalyptic symbols as predictions of the near end of the world, diverting religion from its true ministries of spiritual nurture and social helpfulness, and unhinging feeble minds by needless fears; the use of Paul's few phrases respecting *imputation* † as the corner-stone of a theological system as unmoral as it is irrational, — the mechanical transferrence of merit and guilt, — these are uses of the Bible which neither commend it nor help man. When they cease, religion will be stronger and man will be happier. It is no loss, but gain, for the authority of the Bible in these directions to wither and pass away.

A CRITICISM OF DR. BRIGGS.

The discoveries of Biblical scholarship respecting this body of writings, and of his-

authority as any Greek or Roman myth, — probably not native to Israel, but imported. At best, the language is too vague to serve as a predictive description of any particular person, and it was never called Messianic by the Jews.

* 1 Cor. xi. 5–15, xiv. 34, 35. † Rom. iv. 11, 22.

torical research respecting the other Bibles and religions of our race, have given us a new Bible. And with this new Bible in our hands, the problems press for a fresh discussion and solution, What new uses must we make of Scripture, and what authority shall we accord to it? This question of *authority* in religion is of great magnitude and importance, too large to be fully discussed here; and yet some phases of it, especially as the Bible comes into relation with it, need some consideration in this place.

This subject has recently been ably discussed by Professor Charles A. Briggs. He brings the Bible, the Church, and the reason into comparison as *fountains* of authority; and he uses these words: "We adhere to the Catholic doctrine that the Bible, the Church, and the reason are the three great fountains of divine authority. And we hold to the Protestant position as to their relative place and value,— namely, that *the Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice*. We maintain it over against Roman Catholicism, which exalts tradition to an equal place with Holy Scripture, and

makes the pope, when speaking *ex cathedra* as the supreme head of the Church, the supreme judge in all controversies of religion. We maintain it over against rationalism, which makes the reason the ultimate test by which to determine the validity of all statements of Holy Scripture and Holy Church." *

Now, before considering whether the new Bible of modern scholarship warrants this use and substantiates this claim, I wish to point out what seems to me the radical confusion into which this eminent scholar has fallen. That unfortunate confusion, as I take it, is this: Professor Briggs brings into comparison what are wholly unlike in nature and function. He does not, as his critics have charged, *co-ordinate* the authorities of Scripture, reason, and the Church. He does not set them on the same level, but in the same connection. He brings them into close relation and treats them from a similar point of view as *fountains of authority*. His fundamental mistake, it seems to me, is the fact that he *compares* at

* Briggs, "The Bible, the Church, and the Reason," p. 65, 1892. The Italics are mine.

all things so radically separate and dissimilar, and discusses the relative authority of what ought not for a moment to be considered in the light of authority.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

Professor Briggs, for instance, attributes to the Church *divine authority* where he ought to speak of its *divine ministry*. We all admit that the Church is a sphere of divine life, an organization with most important functions. It associates men in common hopes, ideals, and aspirations of the spirit. It is the organ of religion as a corporate life; and as such it is a social agency of permanent necessity and vast power. The Roman Catholic, passing beyond this position, attributes to the Church a supernatural character, from which, as he claims, flows a superhuman authority respecting belief and conduct.

But as Protestants and as scientific students of history we are compelled to put this claim aside as a baseless assumption. We need not stop to argue against it, for modern thought has decisively set it aside;

and to discuss this problem at all from the point of view of science, we must regard the claim as an assumption. The Church of Rome, as a purely human and natural institution, is the sphere of divine life. Its servants exercise much influence and do great good. But *inherently* it has no authority, except over those who choose to be guided by it, and over these only in certain directions. Its pope speaks, so far as social problems are concerned, no final word. To his opinions on scientific or historical questions the world would give no heed. In the sphere of morals, the influence of his command on humanity at large depends upon his personal character. Only on ecclesiastical matters as they touch those who voluntarily give submission has he authority. But with the Protestant Church, even this limited and external authority almost disappears.

We recognize the sanctity and influence of every church, so far as it is the agent of civilization and the home of an enlightened piety. But *authority in and of itself* to determine what is true and good, it has none whatever. It is, however sacred and useful,

a voluntary association of fallible men, whose collective judgment represents simply an average opinion. It is impossible that the sum of ten imperfect opinions, even the opinions of men engaged in religious affairs, divided by ten to find the average, should have supernatural authority.

Whatever comes out as a church declaration is derived from fallible men, whose limitations flow over into all the products of their deliberation, whether in court, school, or church. Divines at Westminster and priests at the Vatican have made mistakes. So they did at Nicæa and Trent. The black and repulsive records made by church assemblies prove that ecclesiastics are men, with only that wisdom and justice which belong to man as man. The details of these records are too mournful to be spread out here; but whoever cares to study them will soon conclude that churchmen have been *very human*. And it stands to reason that the majority vote of men whose individual judgment would have little weight with us cannot constitute an infallible decision respecting slavery, di-

vorce, the evolution of species, or the mystery of the Godhead. The course of history is strewn with the ruins of *church decrees*, which only serve as monuments of human folly. An aggregation of fallible men, under whatever name and for whatever purpose, cannot clothe their corporate action with final authority. Such an organization has no separate organ or superior faculty by which to determine what are facts and what are duties.

There are many associations which foster the higher life of humanity,— scientific and benevolent societies. They are spheres of divine life, but not sources of authority. Their majority vote does not make a theory true or a policy right. And when Dr. Briggs discusses the *authority* of the Church he seems to ignore these facts; and often what he has in mind is evidently the divine ministry rather than the authority of the Church. And it appears wholly wrong, as I view the case, to couple reason and the Church together along this line. They do not stand on the same level, and they do not perform the same, or even similar, functions.

The Church is essentially and fundamentally a *product* of human nature, of which reason is a *constituent element*. It is the office of the Church to cultivate the religious sentiment, to enrich the moral and spiritual content of human life. It helps man, not by the exercise of authority, but by instruction, persuasion, inspiration, and co-operation. Its great function is *nurture*, not *discovery*. It exists to inspire rather than to rule. So far as the Church has construed its mission to be the use of authority, that far, as history abundantly and mournfully proves, it has not only failed in its own work, but it has really done injury to humanity.

THE AUTHORITY OF REASON.

But human reason has another part to play. It discovers and declares what the facts are, both in the realm of spirit and the realm of matter. By the exercise of reason, and only by its exercise, we learn the truth of nature and the history of humanity; for reason uncovers the law which underlies a multitude of facts, and traces

the power which rules in the apparent confusion of human affairs. This is the oracle in us of the Infinite Life, which is the Divine Providence. To it we go for our knowledge of *what is*.

The human reason is the only avenue which God has opened up between the soul and the facts of this universe. And just because it is the one faculty which shows us the facts, and the laws within the facts, it is the medium and vehicle, or *human seat*, of all authority; for ultimately we must go back to the facts of this universe for final and absolute authority. God resides and presides in facts. These alone are imperial and imperative. Authority abides in reality. The authority of the facts themselves guides the architect as he rears a dome, the electrician as he weaves communities together in his network of wires, and also the statesman as he formulates the policies of nations. Show me what is *real*, and there you reveal a throne. And by reason, and by reason alone, we grasp the realities of nature and history, of moral law and divine duty, in which alone supreme authority dwells.

We assign to the specialist in science a certain amount of authority, because we believe that he possesses an unusual acquaintance with facts; and yet we do not appropriate the authority of God until we see and feel these facts for ourselves. If we walk by text or tradition, we are simply walking by what some other person thought were facts. Therefore, only that is *authoritative* which is true; and it is only by reason that we can discover truth.

And when we say that the authority of reason is supreme, we simply mean that reason alone can give us access to those realities in which God himself dwells. It is the one medium by which we *communicate* with him, whether we read Scriptural page, telescopic report, or the ledges of Mother Earth. God's authority reaches us only through facts, and facts reach us only through that experience in which reason operates; and the more freely it operates, the more immediate the contact with God and the larger our access to divine authority.

Now, to discover these authoritative laws of nature we do not ask the opinion of

ecclesiastics, but we employ reason in careful experiments; and to discover obligatory duties we do not turn to texts, but we employ reason in an appeal to human experience. The Church evidently has no capacity along these lines. It represents a corporate life rather than a faculty of discovery, a moral influence rather than an ability for scientific interpretation. And to discuss the authority of the Church in connection and comparison with reason is to fall into a most deplorable confusion.

THE TRUE RELATION OF REASON AND SCRIPTURE.

A similar line of remarks is applicable to the relation of reason and the Bible. The Bible, like the Church, is a *product* of human nature, and of the emotional rather than the logical elements of human nature. All the truth that it contains was the outcome of some human experience. It is what the reason of some man discovered; for it is only along the avenue of reason that God gets into any soul. A revelation is possible only to the extent of one's

rational capacity. As Rev. George Adam Smith writes: "Revelation is not magical, but rational and moral." * Or, as Dr. Bascom so wisely teaches: "Inspiration stands simply for the mind's hold upon truth." † So that, when we use a Biblical text as an authority superior to reason, we simply make a *finality* of an ancient experience; we put the reason of yesterday above the reason of to-day. By what right this is done, it is not evident.

If the Bible is what modern scholarship declares it to be, it does not have the marks of supernatural origin or infallible character which warrant the subjection of my reason to it. People speak of the authority of the Bible as though a statement *must be believed because found in it.* This is what the claim of supreme and final authority for the Bible really means. If the Bible is made infallible and superior to reason, then I find myself compelled to believe its texts, *because* they are *Biblical texts.* There is no middle ground between this use of the Bible and that rational and scientific use of these

* Smith, "The Book of Isaiah," vol. i. p. 5, 1889.
† Bascom, "The New Theology," p. 23, 1891.

writings, not for authority at all, but for religious nurture. And yet, if the Bible is the *product* of human nature, why should it be made superior to its own *source?* How can infallibility belong to the product of imperfect human nature? Must I accept as final what some man wrote, *because* he wrote it in a *certain place?*

The problem respecting the authority of Scripture narrows down to just this: Must I believe a statement because it is made in the Bible? Only in this way can this volume be considered superior to reason; for when I ask my reason to pass upon these statements before I believe them, then I make my mind, and not the text, a final authority. The point which I press is this: Do you believe this text *because* it is in the Bible? It is only this use of the Bible which makes of it a supreme authority.

For example: when we believe the assertion that God sent a lying spirit to deceive Ahab,* *just because* we find it in the Bible, then that puts Scripture above reason; or when we accept the statement as true that

* 1 Kings xxii. 22. See a curious paragraph in "The Bible Commentary," vol. ii. p. 619, 1873.

the Lord devoured Nadab and Abihu because they "offered strange fire," * *just because* we read this in the Bible, then that puts Scripture above reason. So, also, when we believe other things in the Bible which we would not accept if found anywhere else, — the story of the burning bush † and God's command to exterminate the Canaanites, ‡ — *just because* in this document, then we use it as infallible and place it above human reason. This makes the Bible a realm which reason must not enter at all to investigate or to distinguish between truth and error. *Everything must be believed because in the Bible*, — this, and this in all its rigor, must be our method of use, if Scripture is infallible and supreme. For just as soon as we allow reason to play upon this body of writings, drawing lines between what is higher and lower, more or less important, making distinctions between what is outgrown and what is still essential, and discriminating between various interpretations of texts, — then *final authority* passes from the Bible to reason.

* Lev. x. 2. † Ex. iii. 2.
‡ Num. xxi. 3, xxxiii. 52.

I still press the point: if the Bible is supreme, then you must believe its statements not because they are reasonable, but because they are in the Bible. But what does this usage mean? It means the clothing of the Bible with an authority absolutely unlike that possessed by reason, with which reason cannot be compared, while it amounts to the *abolition* rather than the *subordination* of reason. Human reason *ceases* to have any authority if I must abandon reason and believe texts *because they are in the Bible*. But leave this position, and believe its statements because they *seem reasonable*, and then the seat of authority is moved from Scripture to reason. And as a matter of fact, nobody makes, and nobody can make, this rigorous use of the Bible.

And here we touch one fundamental weakness of Professor Briggs's position. Granting that the Bible contains important truths, and that all truth is authoritative, still it is only by the use of reason that I can take possession of even the truth of the Bible. What lies there is dead until apprehended by my rational faculty. Texts convey no message to an idiot. Unless reason

enters Scripture to interpret its statements, its truth does not enter my soul. And the almost infinite variety of opinions respecting the meaning of certain texts shows that men obtain vastly different messages from the Bible, according as they bring to it diferent intellectual equipments. They find, very largely, what they have a capacity to find. The numerous sects of Christendom and our innumerable commentaries are a complete demonstration that, so far as practical affairs are concerned, the Bible is not an infallible rule of faith and practice. If a supernatural revelation superior to reason, it ought to teach all men the same message. But as a matter of fact, to be used at all, it has to be interpreted; and the Bible is to any man only what his interpretation makes it. The divisions of the Church conclusively witness against the infallibility of Scripture. And as reason alone can tell me what the Biblical page means, and as my interpretation is a product of my intelligence, I insist that my reason, which discovers what the message is, possesses superior authority; for the interpreter must stand above the thing interpreted.

Therefore, these two facts of human experience compel me to reject the claim which Professor Briggs makes for the Bible: (1) To be used, it must be interpreted; it only reaches me through this interpretation, which, as a product of my reason, can possess no authority higher than that of my rational faculty; and (2) The Bible has not served humanity as an infallible authority, because, as was inevitable, men have understood it differently; and a document cannot be an infallible rule of action to two men, one of whom is sure that it teaches a triune Godhead, while the other is equally sure that it does not. Evidently, Scripture is not the infallible guide of *both men;* and it is equally evident that both men are really guided, so far as they act intelligently, by the authority of reason, however imperfect.

But here again I wish to call attention to the confusion which surrounds this subject, and I wish to protest against the *comparison* of things so unlike. The Bible as a *document* ought not to be compared with reason, which is a *faculty*. The Bible, not the *source*, but the *record* of a part of man's

religious life, contains many important facts respecting religious principles and moral laws. These facts, while peculiarly adapted to nourish and inspire the heart, are *authoritative* only as all facts are authoritative. And the great truths here recorded have to be discovered and interpreted by reason, just as the truths of nature everywhere. The authority of reason in the realm of Scripture is the same as its authority in the realm of science; and we are under no more obligation to believe a text in the Bible than an inscription on a Greek or Roman monument. And to contend that the Bible is superior to reason, an infallible rule of faith and practice, is to ignore two very important facts: That reason alone can interpret the Bible, and that a document cannot serve men as such an infallible guide when men necessarily find such different guidance in its pages.

IF ERRORS IN SCRIPTURE, HOW CAN IT BE INFALLIBLE?

One would suppose that an acknowledgment of errors in the Bible such as our modern scholarship compels would quickly

settle this discussion respecting Scriptural authority. But the strange circumstance is that able scholars admit the presence of these errors and still cling to the traditional view of Biblical authority. Professor Briggs forcibly states this position: "If one should find errors of chronology and geography, of historical statement and description of events, of geology and astronomy, of natural history and of archæology, errors in any one or all of these departments [the existence of which Dr. Briggs admits], whether few or many, he would not be in contravention of the statement that *the Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice*." *

For one, doing the best that I can, I can find in this statement nothing but contradiction and confusion. It seems to me that the admission of errors *necessarily* sets the Bible aside, not as worthless, but as a human document, to be used for rational instruction rather than for infallible authority. The claim that the Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice means, and can only mean, so far as I can see, that

* Briggs, "The Bible, the Church, and the Reason," p. 91, 1892.

everything in it must be obeyed regardless of what reason may decide; for when reason enters to distinguish between what is essential and what is unimportant, then reason is made supreme.

The lawyer before the Supreme Court of the United States necessarily accepts the Federal Constitution as a supreme authority; but how he could do this and at the same time assert that it is full of errors that the judges must not heed,—this, I believe, would be called irrational to the point of absurdity. A physician in placing a treatise in the hands of his medical student may well say: "You will find important truths here which you must put in practice, but also some errors"; but how, *admitting those errors*, he could charge the student to consider such a treatise an infallible guide superior to reason, I cannot understand. What would we think of a parent who would send a child a letter with many errors in grammar, history, science, etiquette, and morals, and yet demand that the child use it as an infallible rule of action superior to reason, when only reason could distinguish between its truth and

error? How, if full of errors, could that letter, though valuable in many ways, be an infallible rule of faith and practice?

And yet this is precisely Dr. Briggs's position. He claims infallibility for what he admits contains errors. He confuses two radically different positions. It is true that these errors coexist along with important truths, and that their presence does not destroy the Bible for religious purposes. This is a perfectly rational position. But *his* position is this: There are errors, and yet the Bible is an infallible guide superior to reason. He carries his claim too far. These errors *do not destroy* the Bible,—this is reasonable; but, These errors do not stand in the way of *my use of it* as an infallible rule,—this is irrational.

If Dr. Briggs would limit his efforts to the contention that the Bible, with all its errors, is of infinite value as a religious classic, then he would be on scientific ground; but when he passes beyond this, and contends that its errors do not interfere with its use as an infallible guide superior to reason, then he goes where many of us cannot follow him. He does not seem to

understand what changes in our use of the Bible are made necessary by the discoveries of Biblical scholarship. He does not see what the presence of these errors really means and involves.

That the Bible contains infallible truth along with its errors Biblical science affirms; but these great facts must be borne in mind: (1) This truth is not infallible because in the Bible, but because an accurate statement of the essential laws of human nature. (2) This Biblical truth came through human experience, the same as all other truth; and its relation to reason is precisely the same as the relation of truth wherever found to human reason. (3) The presence of this truth in the Bible does not endow this whole document with infallibility or constitute it an authority superior to reason. (4) While the existence of errors in Scripture does not destroy the truth it contains, yet these errors necessitate a disuse of the Bible as an infallible guide of faith and practice. A document that contains errors may also contain infallible truths which ought to be our supreme guide, but we must not on this account regard or

use *the document* as infallible, — just the distinction which Dr. Briggs fails to see. I join him most heartily in the assertion that these errors in the Bible do not destroy the Bible, but I resist as earnestly his claim that these errors do not stand in the way of its use as an infallible rule of faith and practice.*

THE INSURMOUNTABLE DIFFICULTY.

Dr. Briggs defends himself against this argument in the following language: "These errors are all in the circumstantials and not in the essentials; they are in the human setting, not in the precious jewel itself." † But this covers my way with confusion and lands me in despair. Who

* With all my admiration for Dr. Briggs, I am compelled to admit that he often falls into confusion and sometimes into contradiction. I can find no way to reconcile these passages: —

— "The Church has no authority to determine the canon of the Holy Scriptures, but accepts the canon as it was given by God himself to his church."— *The Bible, the Church, and the Reason*, p. 12.

— "If there had been no divine authority in the Church, there would have been no divine canon of Holy Scripture."— *The Bible the Church, and the Reason*, p. 21.

There is nothing in the connection or context of these passages to explain away this direct contradiction.

† Briggs, "Inaugural Address," p. 35, 1891.

is to make this distinction between what is essential and what is circumstantial? How am I to tell just where the setting stops and the jewel begins? Once churchmen held it essential to our salvation to believe in creation as described in Genesis. But Dr. Briggs says: Oh, no; that account in Genesis is only *a poem* of creation; it is not science. Its statements of details belong to the setting, not the jewel itself. And while *he* holds to the accounts of Jesus' resurrection as *essential*, some other scholar* comes along and tells me that these are not history but *afterthoughts* of reverent fancy, which I need not believe. Confused by such contradictory judgments by equally eminent and reverent critics, what am I to do? Where am I to find what in the Bible is essential and infallible?

Once clergymen insisted that a doubt respecting the historical character of the story of the Exodus would endanger one's right to enter heaven; but Dr. Briggs considers these narratives of the Exodus as somewhat legendary,— *circumstantials* that we are not obliged to accept. But the miracu-

* Abbott, "The Kernel and the Husk," Letters 20–23, 1887.

lous birth of Jesus is an article of essential religion, which must be believed. Yet scholars as great as he set the accounts of Jesus' miraculous birth aside as *wonder-stories*, which must not be believed.

Again I ask: Whom shall I follow, and how in this confusion is the Bible an infallible rule of faith? I open the Bible and read a command: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."* It stands there unrepealed and authoritative. It is not a small matter. It is a positive command. It is not a mere circumstantial. *What am I to do?* If Scripture is "the only infallible rule of faith and practice," how can I ignore this text? Take again this: "But I say unto you that ye resist not evil."† Here is a positive and unqualified approval and commandment of non-resistance. To put it in practice absolutely would destroy human society. Is this part of the setting or of the jewel? How am I to tell? Shall I, like the rest of Christians, except the Quakers, use my reason and set it aside? Then it is my reason, and not the text, that

*Ex. xxii. 18. The same remarks apply to such trivial commands as those found in Deut. xxii. 9–12.

† Matt. v. 39.

is supreme. And when I thus set it aside, *that much* of the Bible ceases to be an infallible rule of faith and practice to me.

Wherever I look in Scripture, I am confronted by the same difficulty. These positive commands stand before me: That the disobedient son be stoned to death,* that idolaters be not allowed to live,† that advocates of all other gospels be treated as accursed;‡ these are positive and unrepealed commands. They are neither trivial nor circumstantial. If I should obey them, I should disgrace myself; if I neglect them, then *that much* of the Bible ceases to be a guide to me. If I am to follow *all* that is taught in the Bible, I must believe in disease as a demoniacal possession, and in dreams as predictive visitations of God, and in prayer as an agency capable of violating the order of nature. And if the only infallible rule, how can I do otherwise? If I set these things aside as *circumstantial*, I do this by authority of reason; and this makes reason so far superior to Scripture.

And when I come to compare the Bible with current church teaching, I find that a

* Deut. xxi. 18–21. † Deut. xvii. 2–7. ‡ Gal. i. 8.

very large part of it has been set aside; not simply here and there a text, but whole chapters, and even entire books. With so much set aside as *circumstantial*, where in the Bible is the infallible rule? Here comes Professor Wendt with a definite answer: "The teaching of the founder of the Christian religion must, with entire consistency, be employed as the standard for testing all church doctrine and tradition." *

Here, then, we have what is infallible *in* the Bible: not Moses and the prophets, not psalmists, nor even Christian apostles, but the *words of Jesus*. But, as Professor Wendt frankly admits, this position compels us to stop using the *Bible as a whole* for an infallible guide: † only a part of it remains as an absolute standard,— the teaching of Jesus.

But here, again, the old difficulty reappears, under a new form. What are the real teachings of Jesus? For Professor Wendt admits that our Gospels are a very imperfect report of Jesus' teaching, because: (1) the apostles often misunderstood

* Wendt, "The Teaching of Jesus," Eng. Tr., vol. i. p. 1, 1892.
† *Idem*, p. 2.

Jesus; and, (2) in the process of editing by which they reached their present shape certain legendary tendencies led to additions and perversions. So that, to possess the real message of Jesus a *distinction* has to be made;* and so he proceeds to draw a line between what came from Jesus and what came in from his disciples through the imperfect process of transmission. That such a distinction has to be made is true; that Professor Wendt does this work with care and skill, all will readily admit; but his selection of what is the message of Jesus is a product of human judgment. Some will say that there is chaff among his wheat, and some that he throws away as chaff what is really wheat. Therefore, at best, Professor Wendt gives me nothing but an uncertain guide, no higher than human reason; for we have an imperfect report of Jesus' thought, and what I am obliged to accept as really his is simply what some man's reason has decided to be the true teaching of Jesus.

To the advocate of rational religion who uses the Bible as a religious classic this is

*Wendt, "The Teaching of Jesus," Eng. Tr., vol. i. p. 3, 1892.

enough for all practical purposes; but this does not make the Bible a guide superior to reason, nor does it give one an infallible rule of faith and practice.* Therefore, both Professor Wendt and Dr. Briggs are alike in this,—though the latter holds to a larger part of Scripture as authoritative,—that the Bible is an infallible rule of faith and practice, *provided* you let them set aside certain things as *circumstantials*.

But here comes the trouble for us all. What are the circumstantials? Some will draw the line in one place, while others will draw it in a different place. The authority which draws it is human reason; so that the supreme authority, after all, is not in Scripture, but in the reason which determines what texts are essential. I am unable to see how I can use the Bible as a supreme guide when there are numerous errors in it, when it has an imperfect human setting, which I should have to take

*All this proceeds upon the assumption that the real teaching of Jesus, *when found*, is perfect. And yet Professor Wendt is not true to his own declaration even in this respect, for he admits ("Teaching of Jesus," p. 166) that Jesus held false ideas respecting disease. In this respect, therefore, even the position of Jesus was not true, and cannot be used as final authority. But if mistaken here, why not in some other places?

for the real jewel were it not for my reason. The presence of error does not destroy the Bible; the truths of Scripture are not destroyed by the fringe of error surrounding them, but this error makes it irrational for us to use this document as an infallible rule of faith and practice.

CANNOT ALL BE TRANSLATED INTO LIFE.

This is perfectly evident when we consider that there is a great deal of the Bible which cannot be translated into life. And unless the Bible can stand this test,— translation into life,— unless it can all be translated into life, every text believed and lived, then it cannot be an infallible rule of faith and practice. We may go to Scripture for instruction and inspiration; we may consider it the most noble and serviceable religious literature in the world; we may use it with the greatest profit, and produce through its study superior results in religion and character,— all this we may do, though there are errors in it; and yet the Bible cannot, as a whole, be translated into life; and its failure to stand this test proves that it is not a supreme and absolute guide.

It may be said, There is enough in the Bible to save anybody, if loyally lived. This is true, and yet it all depends *upon what parts are taken;* for there are texts which, if obeyed, would injure humanity and plunge the soul downward. Any man who should guide his life by the Book of Esther would be hardened by hate, and so far be made inhuman. That writing cannot be translated into life except to the injury of every one.

Others may say, But the Bible, by being used as an infallible rule of faith and practice, has created all the glories of our modern civilization. But several things must be borne in mind in this connection: (1) It is simply *not true* that the Bible has created modern civilization. This is a piece of baseless apologetic exaggeration. Not a single great historical student of the present would accept this statement. Great influence the Bible did have, but no such exclusive or supernatural agency as is often claimed for it. (2) This use of the Bible as a supreme and absolute guide has done immense harm as well as great good. Let any one read Michelet's "History of

France," or Buckle's "History of Civilization," or Cotton Mather's "Magnalia," or President White's "Warfare of Science." There may be traced the rivers of blood shed in obedience to Biblical texts; there may be seen the fires of hate lighted by students of Scripture; there, too, may be found the black cloud of superstition which made the earth too dark for scientific discovery,—a cloud produced by the use of these writings as a final authority.

It may also be said: Any one who obeys the essential teaching of the Bible will live a divine life. Very true. But this is a surrender of the claim that the Bible as a whole is infallible. It is an admission that it cannot all be translated into life. It is also practically an admission that authority does not inhere in the Bible as a document, but in the truth which it contains; and this being the case, it stands related to reason just like all other truth, and is authoritative only as truth in general is authoritative.

The correctness of this assertion that the Bible cannot be all translated into life was abundantly proved on a large scale by the

Jews themselves, who, to save themselves from the crude and cruel texts of the Old Testament, had to invent the allegorical method of interpretation, by which they emptied these texts of their original meaning and filled them with new and higher teachings. To live and grow the Jews had in this way to set aside great numbers of ancient commands. Obedience to the letter would have destroyed Judaism itself. But by a process of allegory they evaporated the hate and inhumanity from many a text, and made the new thought speak through ancient lips.* But the existence of such a device shows how impossible it was for even the Jews to translate all these writings into life. They were able to keep Scripture as a supreme guide only as they used an expansive method of interpretation which enabled them to adjust its texts constantly to their growing life; so that, all the time, underneath this fiction of Scriptural authority, what was really supreme was their own reason.

* The Talmud is full of the products of this method. For instance, the command in Exodus xxi. 24, "Eye for eye," etc., was softened by the interpretation which construed this to mean that whoever destroys the eye of another person must pay its value to the person injured.

And Christian churchmen have followed a somewhat similar course. When the commentator has come to a command which, in its literal and true meaning, violated the accepted science or general moral sentiment of his time, he has devised some new interpretation which really *revised the Word of God up to date;* and it is a well-known fact that theologians as a rule get out of the Bible what they carry to it. So that, in truth, the Bible has never been rigorously translated into life; for some method of interpretation has stepped in to turn the edge of ancient hate and cruelty, or to pour into dry texts the new waters of life.

This being the case, is it not time for us to accept and acknowledge the facts, and cease to insist that the Bible is an infallible rule of faith and practice,— what really it never has been and never can be? And this, because it never has been and never can be all translated into life. Two texts are enough to show this. Take this positive and unrepealed command: "Ye shall not eat of anything that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou

mayest sell it unto an alien." * To attempt to translate that into life in any civilized country to-day would land a person in jail. And yet people say that everything in the Bible is divine!

But you say these things were swept away by Jesus, and are not now binding; and yet they are in the Bible which you put into my hands and command me to follow as the only infallible rule of life. If this document is superior to reason, how am I to know that this is not to be translated into life? Then, again, there are things in the Sermon on the Mount that cannot well be translated into life. "Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow." † A strict and rigid obedience to this language would be an infinite calamity to civilization. But you say, You must take the essential meaning of the passage. Very well; but who shows me what that is? Our common human reason, it is replied. Then what I translate into life is not the precise text, *but what I judge* Jesus meant by it. This, however, transfers final authority from the text to human reason.

* Deut. xiv. 21. † Matt. vi. 34.

The conclusion which we reach, then, is this: As the Bible cannot be translated into life as it lies before us, having to be set aside in part, and all having to be interpreted by human reason, from which arises an infinite variety of views respecting its meaning, therefore it cannot be an absolute guide superior to my own reason.

SCRIPTURE NOT OUR ONLY GUIDE.

Other grave obstacles lie in the way of our use of the Bible as the *only* guide to belief and conduct. It has never helped man in many places where he most needed help. We might reasonably expect that a divine revelation would help man to certain absolutely accurate views of nature; to the truth about the shape of the earth, about the cause of disease, and about such agents as steam and electricity. It is replied that man was left to find these carnal truths out for himself, and that the Bible was meant to help him simply in morals and religion.

But is there any real force in this reply? Have not all these, and many similar matters, a very intimate and important relation

to conduct and piety? The truth about the earth and the solar system would have freed man from immense superstitions. Remedies for the great plagues which have laid waste nations would have done more for human happiness, would have been of more moral importance than predictions of the ruin of Tyre and Damascus which never came true. A knowledge of steam and electricity would have contributed more for human progress than the symbolisms of Daniel and Revelation which nobody can understand.

If God were to make any supernatural disclosures to man, is it not reasonable to suppose that he would help our race to that knowledge of nature which banishes distressing fears and puts in his hands agencies of infinite utility? Some absolutely accurate instruction about hygiene, about methods of education, about forms of government,— would not this have been as important as directions respecting the making of fringe, as religious as commands respecting Levitical purity,* as moral as descriptions in Ezekiel of a temple that

* Read Ex. xxx. 22–38; Lev. xxi. 16–24; Deut. xxi. 7–10.

was never built? Is it said that man did not need the revelation of political economy? But did he not need some infallible authority to teach him how to farm successfully, and so prevent famine and suffering, as much as he needed the genealogies in Chronicles?* Is it said that it would have been useless for God to have revealed modern science in ancient times, before people were able to appreciate it? But could not ancient Egyptians and Babylonians and Israelites have appreciated nearly every scientific truth now known? Is it said that God saw fit to make the Bible simply a *revelation of religion*, for reason could never discover the way of salvation, but it could in time discover science and philosophy? The vanity of such apologetic assumptions is too obvious for extended treatment: (1) The Bible *is something more* than a revelation of religion. It contains historical statements, sanitary regulations, systems of jurisprudence, and many other non-religious elements, a great part of which are very imperfect. If God went beyond the realm of religion to put these in, why not an author-

* 1 Chron. i.-iv.

itative revelation of truths which we need but do not yet have? (2) Are the things set forth in the realm of religion really beyond human reason? * Where in the Bible is there a text which has not its parallel in the sacred writings in other parts of the world? God's object in the Bible to reveal the way of salvation which reason could not discover? But where is it? Other prophets have taught the truths which the Hebrew prophets wrote; other poets, the lessons of the Psalter; other masters of the spirit, the Golden Rule and the Law of Love. The Biblical lessons, on the whole, are doubtless superior; but men with nothing but reason have come so near that we must include these within the scope and possibility of the human soul.

The fact is that the Bible has not served as man's only or sufficient guide, even in some of the higher realms of human effort. It spoke no authoritative word in the heroic

* In the discussion of the problem of revelation, we come down at last to this test question, Has God made any more special and supernatural efforts to teach mankind the way of salvation than the way of health or the science of numbers? Is it not true that God has left man to find his way in religion precisely as in hygiene? that he has guided him to the Golden Rule and to the multiplication table by precisely the same methods of providence?

struggle against slavery. The great apostles of freedom who won the victory for toleration did not feed their altar fires with Bible texts. In the long battle for free popular education, so inwoven with every sanctity and nobility of our modern civilization, the Bible played no conspicuous part. Soldiers in this cause held it in their hands, but they were more directed by Plato and Aristotle than by Isaiah or Paul.* The battle for human equality in State and Church, for freedom of speech, for freedom of belief, for freedom of labor, and for the freedom of women,— this has not been won by Biblical weapons; but often texts have been the chief ramparts in the way of progress. In many of these most momentous crises of civilization the Bible has afforded no help; and when mankind has most needed guidance, texts have not been its rule of life.

And to-day, of the problems which press for solution,— temperance, socialism, the relation of labor and capital, the treatment

*The indebtedness of the early Church to Greek and Roman methods of education is clearly and fully brought out by Hatch, "The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church," Hibbert Lectures, Lecture II., 1888.

of criminals, methods of charity,—*none* finds a solution in the Bible. In reference to none has it a final and authoritative word.* The *only rule* of faith and practice? Let any one consider for a moment his own conduct and conviction. How few of his beliefs have been *solely*, how few even *largely*, determined by texts! how few of his habits completely and exclusively created and ruled by the teaching of the Bible! In reference to a large part of our life Scripture makes no deliverance and has no influence. In a great many of the most solemn exigencies of life we never think of going to the Bible for direction; and if we did, we should not find it.

The *only rule* of faith and practice? No, not even in religion. In the practical administration of the Church we are guided by experience rather than texts. New agencies — from Salvation Army to Christian Endeavor Societies — are created by pressing necessities, and not by Biblical commands. That larger hope for the heathen, that more generous view of human destiny, sprang not from Scripture page, but

* See Smith, "The Book of Isaiah," vol. i. p. 42, 1889.

from the urgency of the modern humanitarian sentiment. It is not taught in the Bible, and Dr. Briggs can only claim that Scripture does not forbid "the comfortable hope." * What rules even this Presbyterian is not ancient text, but the *Time-spirit*. The passing moods and movements of our religious life flow on with little reference to Ecclesiastes or Hebrews; they feed on Tennyson and Browning, on Lowell and Whittier; they follow the authorities of Emerson and Spencer.† The *only rule* of faith and practice? It has never reached but a small fraction of the human race. Are they, then, without guidance? It has never helped in a thousand places where help was needed; it does not help even to-day where direction is most needed. The *only rule* of faith and practice? We believe a thousand things — most important, too — not in its catalogue of doctrines; we do a thousand things — most precious, too — not in its Decalogue; we find our way to the heaven of heavens by

*Briggs, "The Bible, the Reason, and the Church," p. 45, 1892.

†"Very much of our daily life lies in a region never entered by the Bible." Rev. J. H. Ecob, in the *Christian Union*, p. 102, Jan. 16, 1892.

lights that flash from other sources; we go not where its sign-posts direct, and the blessed God meets us with benedictions.

The *only rule* of faith and practice? No, it does not claim even to be a *rule* of life. It is something better: it is a *means of instruction, a source of inspiration.* Its true value does not lie in its *authority*, the use of its texts to compel belief or behavior, but in its capacity to *impart* religious sentiment. To the scholastics Aristotle was a great authority, to us he is more than that, — a great teacher. Our modern use is better for human progress than the use made of Aristotle by mediæval dogmatists. The sooner we take the Bible for what it is, a religious classic, and cease to use it for authority, and stop calling it a *rule* of life, the better for the Bible and the better for humanity.

The exact truth has, I think, been stated by Rev. Mr. Ecob: "My Bible, being a record [*one* of the *records*, I would say] of God's ways with the souls [of some] of his children, is a help to show me how he has dealt with them in ages past under varied circumstances [all history and literature

have served, and still serve, this purpose]; it brings me into loving acquaintance with the inner life of many of his saints; it unfolds the secret methods of his providence in human history; *but it cannot take the place of that continuous revelation of himself to our own souls.*" * There speaks a real faith that God is something more than a *reminiscence*, a faith that man is by nature the child of the living God, who can really join Jesus in saying, "Our Father."

EVILS OF THE DOGMA OF SUPERNATURAL REVELATION.

A survey of human history shows, I think, that the use of any document as a supreme and supernatural authority is, on the whole, an injury to mankind. And for these reasons: —

(1) This practice erects artificial and harmful barriers between man and man; it draws a fictitious and unnatural line of separation between those who hold to such a document and those who do not; and from

* Ecob, "A Very Fallible Sentence," the *Christian Union*, p. 103, Jan. 16, 1892. A very vigorous criticism of Dr. Briggs's claim that the Bible is "the only infallible rule of faith and practice." The Italics are mine.

this source arise bigotry, intolerance, and persecution. The man who has what he thinks is God's infallible Word in his hands feels that all others must be made to accept it and live by it. He has the only truth that can save the soul, and men must be driven into believing it. Those who have occupied this position have been swift and eager to put unbelievers on the rack and light the fires about the feet of heretics. This *misuse* of the Bible has brought division and cruel contention among men. It has torn human hearts with needless agonies, and shed rivers of blood. The *disuse* of the Bible as infallible authority has been coincident with the growth of universal toleration and fraternity. We are most truly humane when we hold that all men, however crude, have potentially the same access to the Divine Mind, to the fountains of wisdom.

(2) This practice puts a bar across the pathway of progress and discovery. The *infallible* Aristotle had to vanish before the revival of learning could begin. The *infallible* Galen had to pass away before Harvey, Bichat, and Cullen could reform

mediæval science and put the healing art where it could expand. The *infallible* English law impeded the great work of Bentham and Romilly. The *infallible* Cuvier had to be overthrown before modern science could enter on the freedom of endless discovery. Every intelligent student of history knows how the *misuse* of the Bible as infallible authority has retarded progress. Its texts have blocked the way of scientists; they have been used to frighten reformers from gracious ministries; and almost every modern benefactor has found the Bible as an obstacle in his pathway,—no fault of the Bible, but of a false method. The Bible used as a *finality* chains the living present to the dead past, turns our dawn into darkness, and makes a merit and necessity of *conformity*. The incentive to discover is paralyzed by the obligation to believe what is written. This misuse of the Bible is passing away, for modern thought has won a lasting victory for freedom of inquiry.

(3) This practice perverts the moral sentiments in a most injurious fashion. The man who feels that he is a favorite of Heaven is sure to have a twist in his con-

science. Whoever thinks that the Almighty has opened his mind especially to him allows himself an undue latitude, and looks upon common folk as inhabitants of a lower level. History is full of the sad stories of those who fell into sin and cruelty because they felt themselves inspired. When the pressure of the moral law is lessened, and one comes to feel that he is a privileged character, then moral deterioration begins. The man who imagines that he stands in a peculiar relation with the Almighty, and has a special influence with him, is in a very dangerous position. He is almost sure to become selfish, bigoted, and conceited. These remnants of *tribal morality* are conspicuous in many who handle the Bible as a special revelation. Just as members of the tribe prided themselves upon their superiority to every one else, and felt that moral obligation went no farther than the limits of their own tribe, so churchmen, with the Word of God *given just to them*, have very often exhibited a most unlovely pride, and have held that outside their sect they need not be obedient to some of the higher moral duties.

So far as the use of the Bible as a special revelation has made men feel that they are favorites of God, that far has this practice contributed to an imperfect moral ideal and conduct. The Bible itself is not free from this imperfection; there is here and there in the Hebrew prophets a most unlovely egotism, and even Paul wrote: "Let us do good unto all men, *especially* unto them who are of the household of faith."* It is dangerous to think that God is especially our God, for that makes us proud; pride of sect makes us narrow; and in our narrowness we forget that the moral law is universal.

CHANGES IN RELIGION FLOWING FROM THE NEW USES OF THE NEW BIBLE.

As we come to understand and appreciate the new Bible disclosed by modern scholarship, we see that it is not a document to be used for authority, but a religious literature to be used for instruction and inspiration in righteousness. And these changes in our attitude to Scripture and use of it lead to other great changes in religious affairs:

*Gal. vi. 10.

(1) As the Bible ceases to be used as a storehouse of texts for the construction of creeds, and comes to be more freely used for religious nurture, the impression is deepened that religion is not belief in theological opinions, but growth of inner life, outflowing in beneficent action. Biblical science, by showing us that the Bible cannot be used for authority in doctrines, has helped us to see that religion is not dogma, but life. We see that the real Bible is not a theological treatise, but a chapter in the religious life of humanity. The discovery that we cannot go to Scripture for finalities of speculative opinions has led us to resort to it for its conduct-values. And this new conception of the Bible has helped toward a new and more spiritual conception of religion. Whenever a man comes to use the Bible as a religious literature, then he begins to seek the kingdom of heaven as a fulness of spiritual life rather than as an orthodoxy of belief.

(2) This change in the use of the Bible, and in the conception of the character of true piety, will work a radical change in the basis of church organization and the

habit of religious fellowship. The use of the Bible for authority respecting dogma has led to churches based on creeds. This dogmatic use of the Bible has split Christendom into innumerable warring sects and parties. People have felt that they must organize religion upon belief in what the Bible teaches about this or that. And fellowship has been made to follow these lines of dogmatic belief. A man who does not get the same dogma out of Scripture that we do is a heretic, and cannot belong to our church. But the discovery that the Bible is no final or supernatural authority leads to a disuse of it for creed-making; and, when disused for dogma, then churches, instead of being organized as in the past to champion an opinion derived from Scripture, and therefore considered infinitely precious, will be organized on the basis of a spiritual purpose to bring in the kingdom of heaven by preaching and showing the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

The Bible, in ceasing to be the storehouse of dogma, will cease to foster sectarianism and intolerance. That will be a

great day for human progress; for then our churches, instead of being dogmatic fortresses, will be temples of the spirit, open to every seeker for truth and laborer for humanity; our fellowship will be as wide as human need, and the religious waste from sectarianism will cease, while the religious destitution of towns and villages will come to an end, because there will arise an administration of religion so rational and so humane that all good men will gather around these new altars consecrated to a universal and ethical piety.*

(3) The advance to popularity and prominence of these new views respecting the Bible will make religion freer, gladder, more rational, more spiritual, and more powerful. The Bible itself will become a new source of interest and joy. When the bondage of a literal, a textual, and a dogmatic use of Scripture ceases, then we shall

* President Hyde, of Bowdoin College, Maine, has recently written a startling article on "The Impending Paganism in New England," the *Forum*, June, 1892. The conditions which he describes are wide-spread and deplorable. The remedy which he suggests is good as far as it goes, but it fails, I think, to be sufficiently radical. I have myself discussed the problem from another point of view, and have suggested more decisive measures,—"The Religious Destitution of Villages," a chapter in "Problems in American Life," 1889. I there refer to quite an extensive literature touching this important subject.

rejoice in a use of the Bible that allows reason and sentiment free scope. It is a joy to read the Bible as we would any other book, feeling that no dogmatist is near to club us if we doubt, and no roaring hell yawning for us if we reject a text here and there. The work of the pulpit will be richer and more attractive when the minister shall come to use the Bible for increase of life rather than for the proof of theological opinions; when, feeling free to range through universal history, having been emancipated from bibliolatry, he shall go to other Scriptures for lessons of hope and heroism. And the Sunday-school,—how much broader and nobler its work will become when, lifted out of its mechanical methods and freed from its dogmatic spirit, it shall become the home of a freedom comparable with the public school, and also the throne of a teacher in touch with modern Biblical scholarship rather than looking backward to the vanishing dogmas of Calvin and Wesley!

THE BIBLE WILL NOT DIE.

We need have no fears for the Bible. It will live as long as humanity lives. As the product of a remarkable race, rich in religious life because trained in many lands and fertilized by the culture of many peoples,* these Scriptures pulsate with hopes and ideals that can never grow old; for they are fundamental elements of our common human nature. It may not exercise the peculiar authority which dogmatic Protestants once attributed to it; but the Bible will be better used if used less as an authority and more as a religious classic. Discoveries will bring it nearer to us; they will sweep away the reverence of superstition to create a more spiritual appreciation; and, while old uses will cease, new uses will arise which will continue its contributions to civility and piety. And our chief anxiety should be to use the Bible for increase of inner life,— never as a cloud to darken the dayspring, and never as an authority to stop

* There are adequate natural and historical causes to account for the fact that our Bible is superior to the other sacred scriptures of the race.

inquiry; but as an aid to our own spirit to make more audible and persuasive the voice of the living God, in whom we, as well as Isaiah and Paul, live, move, and have our being.

APPENDIX : CONTRADICTIONS IN THE GOSPELS.

TOPICS.

1. Minor Contradictions.
2. Differences in the Genealogies.
3. The Calling of the Apostles differently told.
4. Different Dates for the Crucifixion.
5. Contradictions respecting the Resurrection.
6. No Historical Evidence for the Reappearance of Jesus.
7. These Facts must shape our Use of the Gospels.

APPENDIX: CONTRADICTIONS IN THE GOSPELS.

MINOR CONTRADICTIONS.

THERE are many evidences of fading memories and legendary accretions in our canonical Gospels. These features show unmistakably that the material here given had travelled a good way by oral tradition before it was written down; and by this passage from mind to mind the wonders grew more wonderful. Differences of detail crept into the accounts, while something passed over from the minds of the reporters into the message of Jesus; so that "every word is not a saying, nor every narrative a history of Jesus." *

A few of the minor contradictions are the following: In Matthew x. 10 and Luke ix.

* Keim, "Jesus of Nazara," Eng. Tr., vol. i. p. 91, 1873. Matthew Arnold makes some valuable remarks on this general subject in "Literature and Dogma," chap. vi. Mr. Cone in his admirable work, "Gospel Criticism and Historical Christianity," 1891, writes wisely of the apocalyptical sayings at the close of the Gospels.

3 Jesus is represented as commanding his disciples *not* to take staves, but in Mark vi. 8 he directs them to take nothing "save a staff only." The healing of Bartimæus is said, in Matthew xx. 29 and Mark x. 46, to have occurred as Jesus went *out* of Jericho; but in Luke xviii. 35, evidently the same healing is described as happening "as he was *come nigh* unto Jericho." In Matthew xxvii. 44 and Mark xv. 32, the criminals who were crucified with Jesus are *both* reported as reviling Jesus; but in Luke xxiii. 39 a tradition is added to the effect that *only one* reviled him, while the other rebuked his fellow sufferer and gained the Master's commendation.*

DIFFERENCES IN THE GENEALOGIES.

The genealogies are so differently given in Matthew i. 1–17 and Luke iii. 24–38 that each writer must have had before him independent and contradictory sources of information. The following are a few of the differences: The First Gospel traces Jesus'

*The contention of apologists that these accounts may be reconciled by supposing that one refers to an earlier and the other to a later period in the same general event is no more than a mere assumption which is in opposition to the manifest implications and probabilities of the case.

descent from David through *Solomon;* the Third, from David through *Nathan;* and both cannot be true. In Matthew there are *twenty-eight* generations from David to Jesus; in Luke there are *forty-three.* In Matthew Joseph's father is named Jacob; but in Luke, *Heli.*

Beside these and other contradictions, there are difficulties of another kind. According to 2 Kings viii. 25, xi. 2, xiv. 7, and xix. 25, Joram (Jehoram) was the *great-great-grandfather* of Ozias (Uzziah), but in Matthew Joram is made the father of Ozias. Again, in the First Gospel only ten generations intervene between Jesus and Zorobabel, a period of over five centuries. This gives to every generation a half century, on an average; an unnaturally long span of life. But the genealogy in Luke gives twice this number of generations for the same period, a more reasonable reckoning. The attempts to harmonize these accounts are unsuccessful in every particular.

This is a small matter, it may be said, which, in an ordinary ancient document, would occasion no surprise. But such mistakes in an *infallible revelation* are astonish-

ing. It is hard to see what supernatural inspiration was needed to produce genealogies so obviously human and inaccurate. Moreover, the genealogy in Matthew i. 1–17 was evidently constructed upon the supposition that Jesus was the *natural* son of Joseph, because he has to be included to make the last fourteen generations, verse 17. This, however, is contradicted by the wonder-story that follows, and that undoubtedly represents a birth-legend which grew up at a much later date.

THE CALLING OF THE APOSTLES DIFFERENTLY TOLD.

One of the most remarkable discrepancies of the Gospels (proving that in their present shape they cannot all be the work of eye-witnesses) is that in reference to the calling of the first apostles. Matthew iv. 18–22 and Mark i. 16–20 are in substantial agreement; and this is the story that they tell: —

(1) This event occurred some time *after* Jesus' baptism and temptation. (2) While walking by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus called

the brothers Peter and Andrew to follow him, they, at the time, being out on the water casting a net for fish. (3) Just after this, as he went farther along the shore, Jesus saw James and John in a boat on the lake mending their nets; and, when called, they too followed him. Everything here is clear, distinct, and natural.

But in Luke v. 1–11 a totally different account of the calling of the same persons is given: (1) The two boats of Peter and Andrew, James and John were close together on the shore and empty when Jesus came along; and these men were washing their nets. (2) Jesus entered Peter's boat, and, asking him to push out from the shore a little, he preached to the people. (3) After the address, Jesus directs Peter to let down his nets; and when this was done, an immense catch of fish is secured,— so large that Peter is strangely impressed with Jesus' superiority, and this leads him to confess his sins. (4) *After this* Jesus called these four men (who were together at the time contrary to the accounts in Matthew and Mark) to be his disciples; and they followed him. Evidently there is here

a touch of marvel due to legend; and this account cannot be harmonized with what is said in the first two Gospels. *There* Jesus is on the shore as he calls them; *here* he is with Peter in the boat. *There* the two boats are some distance apart, and there is a successive calling of Peter and Andrew first and James and John afterward; *here* these men are together, and the call comes to all at once. *There* the call is without any exciting incident; *here* circumstances are related — the surprising draught of fish, and Peter's confession — for which there is no room in Matthew or Mark.

Now, if we turn to the Fourth Gospel, i. 35–42, we find an account absolutely at variance with, not only the first two Gospels, but Luke as well: (1) The calling of Peter and Andrew is put in John on the next day after the baptism, which leaves no time for the forty days' temptation; and the account is in this and other respects a direct contradiction of Matthew. (2) The scene of the event is evidently here laid in the neighborhood of Jerusalem rather than on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. (3) Though the language is somewhat obscure in places,

yet it is plain that neither Peter nor Andrew is regarded by the writer as a Galilean or a fisherman; while Andrew, at least, is represented as a disciple of John the Baptist; and all this cuts directly across the accounts in the other Gospels. (4) Andrew and his companion *seek* Jesus on hearing John the Baptist call him the Lamb of God, and they follow him to his abode. Jesus does not call them, but they seek him; an attitude in keeping with the more mystical character here assigned to Jesus, but contrary to the representation in the other Gospels. (5) Andrew is here made to *go after* his brother Simon and bring him to Jesus as the Messiah; and, when brought, Jesus gives him the new name Peter. But both these circumstances — the acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah and the bestowal of the new name — are placed by Matthew much later in the ministry of Jesus, and are set in a different country and in a different chain of events. See Matthew xvi. 13–18.

For myself, I most earnestly wish that these accounts were more complete, and in perfect accord; but it is both unscientific and irreligious to ignore or belittle these

contradictions. The account in the Fourth Gospel is about as unlike the story in Matthew as it well could be. Intentional misrepresentation is not what we have before us, but, surely, not infallible accuracy. When we remember how these documents grew into their present shape, it is not strange that we should find these differences, — the product of an honest but fallible effort at human narration. This fact must be accepted; and our estimate and use of these Gospels must be shaped according to it.

DIFFERENT DATES FOR THE CRUCIFIXION.

According to Matthew, with which, in this respect, Mark and Luke substantially agree, the date of the crucifixion was *the day after the passover*, Nisan 15. The order of events is plainly given as follows: (1) Jesus ate the last supper, or passover, Nisan 14, Matthew xxvi. 17, 20–26. (2) The heart-struggle in Gethsemane, the night following, Matthew xxvi. 36. (3) The betrayal, later that night, Matthew xxvi. 47. (4) Trial and condemnation, the

next day, Matthew xxvii. 7. (5) Jesus crucified on that day, *Nisan 15*, Matthew xxvii. 26.

In the Fourth Gospel an equally plain sequence of events is described; but, according to it, the crucifixion falls *on the passover*, or Nisan 14: (1) The only supper described occurred on Nisan 13, John xiii. 1. (2) Jesus announces that Peter will deny him before the cock crows on the following morning, John xiii. 38. (3) The long discourse at the end of the meal, John xiv.–xvii. (4) Jesus then went into the garden, John xviii. 1. (5) His arrest followed that night, John xviii. 4–14. (6) The trial began early the next morning, John xviii. 15–27. (7) Jesus was crucified that same day, *Nisan 14*,* John xix.

No ingenuity has ever been able to explain away this contradiction. Two of the ablest of modern New Testament scholars, both conservatives, have most unreservedly admitted the existence of this contradiction. Professor Meyer, thought by many to be the greatest Biblical exegete of the century, wrote: "According to the Synoptics,

* The differences respecting the *time of day* are less important.

the Friday of the death of Jesus was thus the 15th Nisan, but, according to John, the 14th Nisan: . . . the difference between John and the Synoptics is incapable of being adjusted."* The late Dr. Hort — and his words represent the general conclusion of present Biblical science — wrote: "I feel sure that St. John meant to place the crucifixion on Nisan 14. . . . The most obvious, and perhaps the most probable, view is that St. John is tacitly, but deliberately, correcting an error of the Synoptics."† How infallibility can reasonably be claimed for documents which differ respecting so important a matter as the date of the crucifixion is past my comprehension.

CONTRADICTIONS RESPECTING THE RESURRECTION.

Of greatest importance are the discrepancies and contradictions in the accounts of the resurrection. They all alike present the unmistakable evidence of compilation. Various fragments have been patched together

* Meyer, "Commentary on the Gospel of John," Am. Tr., pp. 486-489, 1884.

† The *Expositor*, p. 182, March, 1892.

in every case. None is a clear and continuous narrative; but in every one the lines are broken and the story is blurred and confused. In Matthew the interpolation, xxviii. 11–15, respecting the false report of the guard (peculiar to this Gospel, though an expanded form of the legend has been brought to light in the recently recovered fragment of the so-called Gospel of Peter) breaks the connection, and was probably placed in the text by a late editor.

In Mark the original account of the resurrection ended at the eighth verse (see Revised Version, 1881) with the mere announcement of Jesus' resurrection. The last twelve verses are a patchwork of at least three fragments which fail to make a clear impression. In Luke the same broken lines and abrupt transitions are found. The incident described in xxiv. 13–35, the appearance of Jesus to the two on the way to Emmaus, is an expansion of the brief statement in Mark xvi. 12, 13, as the story of the guard in the false Peter is an expansion of the tradition related in Matthew. The narrative broken off by this interpolation at verse 12 is left unfinished; for verse

36 takes up the story in a new spirit and at a new point. In the Fourth Gospel, xx., Mary is introduced in the eleventh verse without any clear connection with what has just been stated. The story in the closing chapter (evidently a later appendix) is peculiar to this Gospel; and it is in conflict with Matthew in this respect: Here the meeting with the risen Jesus in Galilee is clearly *unexpected*, while in Matthew xxviii. 16 the disciples are described as going to a specific place in Galilee on purpose to meet him.

The only element common to all these Gospels is the statement that the sepulchre was found to be empty. In all other respects there are either differences or positive contradictions: —

I. They differ respecting the persons first at the sepulchre:* in Matthew xxviii. 1, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary; in Mark xvi. 1, Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Mary the mother of James; in Luke xxiv.

* The language in Matthew in reference to the time of day is very obscure. Keim, "Jesus of Nazara," argues that it was twilight Saturday eve, their Sabbath; and he has been followed by Macan and some others. Meyer and the majority of critics contend that the words mean twilight Monday morning, which places Matthew in substantial agreement with the other Gospels.

10, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, *and other women;* in John xx. 1, Mary Magdalene is clearly represented as going *alone;* and here is a most decisive difference. Some have tried to harmonize John with the others by supposing that Mary Magdalene was ahead of the other women, and that what John relates occurred *before* the others arrived; while the Synoptics narrate what took place when the others had come up and they were all together. The fatal objection to their combination in this way is the fact that one account excludes the other; there is no place in the Synoptics for this separate or earlier visit of Mary Magdalene, and no place in the Fourth for the incidents related in the other Gospels; for when Mary Magdalene, being alone, turned back, she did not meet the other women, but went to Peter. The most serious objection is this: according to Matthew, the stone was still against the door when the women arrived, and it was rolled away in their presence; but in John, Mary Magdalene found it already rolled away when she reached the sepulchre. *Therefore*, the supposition that

she was simply going on ahead cannot be true; because, if so, she could not find a certain thing *accomplished* which, according to Matthew, was done *after* all had reached the spot.

II. The Gospels all differ respecting the number, situation, and message of the angels, or the mysterious persons who appear in the accounts. According to Matthew, only one angel appears. He rolls away the stone from the door of the sepulchre in the presence of the women; while *without* the sepulchre he announces the resurrection of Jesus. And he also sends word to the disciples to meet Jesus in Galilee, in apparent conflict with Acts i. 4, where the disciples are commanded *not* to depart from Jerusalem. According to Mark, the stone was rolled away *before* they arrived. They saw *one angel* after they entered the sepulchre; and, while all were together *within* the tomb, — not *without*, as in Matthew, — the angelic announcement and message are given. According to Luke, while *within* the sepulchre *two* angels stood by them; and they argued with the women about the resurrection, but evidently (see

verse 11) sent no word to the disciples.

III. These Gospels differ in their statements respecting what these women did when they found the sepulchre empty. Matthew says that they went with great joy and told the disciples. Mark says: "Neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid." Luke practically agrees with Matthew. The difference in Mark is decisive.

IV. There are numerous contradictions in the statements respecting the first appearance of Jesus after his resurrection:

MATTHEW: To the women near the sepulchre, that morning.

MARK: To Mary Magdalene, near the sepulchre (apparently), during a second visit.

LUKE: To two of the disciples later that day, on their way to Emmaus. That this was meant by the writer as the first appearance is clear from verses 33–36, where the conduct of every one implies this fact.

JOHN: To Mary Magdalene, near the sepulchre.

PAUL: To Peter! 1 Corinthians xv. 5.

V. The accounts of the second appearance of Jesus do not harmonize:

MATTHEW: Some time after, to the eleven disciples, in Galilee.

MARK: To the two who walked that day into the country.

LUKE: In Jerusalem, to the disciples.

JOHN: On the evening of the same day, to the disciples, at Jerusalem, Thomas being absent.

PAUL: To the twelve. The betrayal by Judas is here ignored.

VI. The number of the appearances of the risen Jesus are differently given:

MATTHEW gives *two* appearances, — to the women near the sepulchre and the disciples in Galilee, — and by strong implication excludes all others.

MARK gives three, — to Mary Magdalene, to the two who walked into the country, and to the disciples or apostles, — all in or near Jerusalem.

LUKE gives *two*, — to the two on the way to Emmaus, and to the eleven in Jerusalem.

JOHN gives *four*, — to Mary Magdalene, to a part of the disciples, eight days after to all the disciples, afterward to the disciples in Galilee.

PAUL gives *five*, — to Peter, to the *twelve*,

to five hundred brethren, to *James*, to all the apostles.

VII. The ascension is very differently described in the New Testament:

MATTHEW: Some time after the resurrection, in Galilee, xxviii. 16–20.

MARK: Evidently the same day, in Jerusalem, xvi. 14–19.

LUKE: The same day, from Bethany, xxiv. 13, 36, 50.

JOHN: No definite statement of an ascension, but the parting appearance some time after, in Galilee, xxi.

ACTS: Seen for forty days, and ascended from Jerusalem, i.

NO HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE REAPPEARANCE OF JESUS.

In the midst of so much indefiniteness, confusion, and contradiction, it is impossible to tell what really occurred. We are not dealing here with historical evidence at all, but with legends at different stages of development. The bare statements themselves — the shining angels, the shadowy form of Jesus which comes and goes, the

dream-like visions — all these show that we are here in a mere wonderland created by reverent fancy. From a careful study of Acts and Paul's letters, it seems probable to me that the original belief was simply that Jesus, instead of remaining like others in the under-world, was *alive with God.* The personal impression made by Jesus himself, — such a man could not really die, — reinforced by the ardent Messianic hopes fed from ancient Hebrew prophecies, and stimulated by certain visions inevitable in a season of such excitement, — these forces and factors were sufficient to create the belief that Jesus, like Elijah, had ascended directly to God's right hand. It would need no reanimated *body* to produce this belief. Such a factor does not appear in Acts or Paul's letters; but this belief that Jesus was alive with God once started, legend would naturally fill the dim regions about the sepulchre with specific details.

So far as I can see, this whole circle of Gospel traditions which surround the sepulchre, rooting in what experiences we cannot now tell, represents what certain legends had grown to be some forty or sixty years

after Jesus' crucifixion; and they differ because they branched off in various directions, and were written out in different periods of that growth. We simply cannot tell what happened, because the material before us is too full of legendary elements. We are under no obligation to explain the empty grave or account for the disposition of Jesus' body; for nothing in this line belonged to the original belief, which was simply the conviction that Jesus was alive with God. The stories which cluster about the sepulchre grew up afterward to give that belief a local habitation. One thing is evident: men trained in scientific habits of thought are less and less inclined to accept these statements as adequate proofs of Jesus' bodily resurrection. Such an event is not necessary to explain the origin of Christianity.*

THESE FACTS MUST SHAPE OUR USE OF THE GOSPELS.

Now, when we consider the purpose and origin of the Gospels, it does not seem

*One of the most satisfactory discussions of this subject is Macan, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," 1877.

strange that these defects and limitations should be present. These writings are not photographic reports made on the spot while Jesus' ministry was unfolding; they are not the systematic narratives of eye-witnesses made with scientific precision. They grew up slowly in the atmosphere of marvel and wonder, to reflect the image and communicate the message of Jesus of Nazareth. For this purpose they are precious and invaluable; and yet, at every text we ask for more details and clearer outlines.

We are thankful that these Gospels are as sober and historical as they are; but to expect absolute accuracy would be unreasonable, and to use them as an infallible revelation is a mistake. They are simply a serviceable record, true to the times when written. We have to read them with critical discrimination. At best it is sometimes difficult to draw the line between fact and poetry, and impossible to decide in places which of these various narratives is the more accurate. And yet, there is enough here to win our reverent love for Jesus; and enough of his spirit shines through to make our hearts stronger and our paths plainer.